

## I Can't Tell What You're Thinking (Please Tell Me What You're Thinking)

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## I Can't Tell What You're Thinking (Please Tell Me What You're Thinking)

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### Summary

*"I can't tell what you're thinking," George finally says, breaking their unbearable silence. His voice was pleading, begging for clues.*

*Dream remains silent, and for once, George absolute hates it. He hates it so much that he feels sick.*

*"Please tell me what you're thinking," George whispers, his voice low. He remembered when Dream had said that to him, voice raw and vulnerable, eyes filled with all the guilt in the world. And now here George was, not at fault, yet he was still the prey of miscommunication.*

*"I don't know," Dream says slowly, "what I'm thinking."*

It all happened by accident, really. Dream was supposed to pass his computer science class, not fall in love with the cute guy who sat in the front row.

(The funny thing is, Dream can read minds. Literally. He can hear everyone's thoughts.

Falling in love hadn't been an option... at least, not until this perfect, British asshole decided to ruin that for him.)

### Notes

Hi-hi everybody!

Yes, I know, I KNOW I have like 2 other ongoing fics rn but I really wanted to write this!

If you didn't see in the tags, I loosely based this off of the anime The Disastrous Life of Saiki K because it's my comfort show, oml, go watch it it's so good!

I hope you enjoy! I'm aiming for this fic to be 20k words, it will be short and updated pretty quickly.

# Chapter 1

## *Dream*

Here's the thing about being able to hear everyone's internal conflicts and thoughts all the time: it makes you hate humanity to the *extreme*.

Imagine trying to hold a conversation with someone where what they're saying is "wow, that jacket is so cute" but what they're thinking is *that's the ugliest f-ing jacket I've ever seen* like Regina George from Mean Girls or some shit.

That little scenario? That's Dream's entire *life*.

If you asked someone if they wanted to be friends with a pathological liar, the most mentally stable response would be *no*, but Dream wishes nothing more than the ability to be lied to and not *know* about it.

See, the thing about being a mind reader in today's society is that there's no explanation for it. Literally. Dream just sprouted with these insane abilities out of nowhere with thankfully docile parents who didn't think *holy shit, I just birthed a mutant* but instead thought *god damn, this kid is gonna make fucking bank when he's older*. Call them resourceful, or complete idiots, but either way, here was Dream, age twenty-one, mind reading capabilities winning him a spot at a prestigious college without much effort.

So, *how* does Dream read minds? It's simple, and entirely involuntary. Actually, it would be wonderful if he could turn off the ability like a light switch. But what happens is that he can hear every voice within a 200 meter proximity, internal and external. In other words, he's been desensitized from a young age as poor seven-year-old Dream ended up walking past an in-session high school campus.

The internal dialogue of teenage boys is something no one, absolutely *no one* should be subject to, much less an elementary-age kid.

You may be thinking, "oh, so Dream has it easy!"

That couldn't be further from the truth.

Having this ability makes it practically impossible to have any friends, but it makes it even more impossible to fall in love.

After over twenty years of hearing the inner babbling of humanity, Dream decided that falling in love would be a hard pass. People were disgusting.

That didn't mean he hadn't tried, though. He managed to get a girlfriend in high school, somehow, even though he was something of a recluse back then (not that that had changed). He considered the thought of *hey, this isn't so bad* even when, while they were supposedly making out, he had to listen to her thoughts about the latest episode of The Bachelor. At first, it had been the guilt to drive him away from her; the guilt because he was clearly invading her privacy, but he was helpless to it. Then, it was the fact he listened to her vivid memories of the guy she cheated on Dream with.

Well, at least there's that perk. It's impossible to trick someone with unexplained mind-reading capabilities.

(Or so Dream thought. And if you couldn't tell by the foreshadowing, Dream's outlooks on life, and love, would be changed drastically.)

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Usually, Dream avoided social gatherings like the plague.

Part of it was the noise, which invaded his mind like a million layers of insecurity, and the other part was what the voices were *saying*:

*I wonder if my ass looks good in these jeans.*

*So. Fucking. Tired.*

*If I don't have sex in the next five minutes, Heather is getting blasted on the way home.*

Unfortunately (and fortunately for reasons later revealed), he had no choice this morning.

Dream ended up sleeping in way too late to leave him time to make his own coffee before his first class, a fact revealed as his roommate had used up all the coffee beans and left his mug in the sink, unwashed. Typical.

So Dream had to go to a coffee shop.

It was awful.

The line was long, the internal dialogues were excessive. The weariness tugged at his eyelids with such reckless abandon that Dream actually considered falling asleep standing up.

"Hi! What can I get for you?"

Dream had been so zoned off in his own mind that he was shocked to find that the barista behind the register was vying for his attention.

Usually, Dream was brought to attention by the sounds of new voices, in this setting usually being something along the lines of *this customer better make a quick decision or else I'm throwing this cash register at their indecisive ass* but instead, this barista's voice was the first sound he heard.

"Uh," Dream says ungracefully, trying to ignore the sound behind him of a customer that was very impatient for him to order. The barista looked at him expectantly, but with a patience.

Wait.

Something was off.

"Would you like a suggestion?" the barista offers. He was cute. Usually Dream didn't get the chance to make such a speculation because people pissed him off with their internal conflicts too much before he got the chance.

*Oh.*

That's when it hit him:

He couldn't hear a *single* thought from this guy— *George* as it read on the tag pinned to the strap of his black apron.

“Sure,” Dream blurts. He hoped his panic wasn’t showing as usually it was so easy to converse when he could just say what he knew they wanted to hear. But instead, he was flying blind. Grasping for straws. He had no idea what the fuck he was doing.

“Well, I like the iced chai,” George says, brown eyes lit with gentle excitement.

“You do?” *Yes, Dream. That’s what he just said, you idiot.* He was still a little mesmerized as he got to *hear* George’s voice before he listened to it in his own mind. It was nice, accented.

“I do,” George repeats. How was he so patient? Dream was glad he couldn’t hear George’s inner thoughts at this point as he was sure they were spewed with many curses, which was valid.

But when Dream looked in his eyes, he didn’t seem to have such thoughts.

“I’ll- have that, then,” Dream says, gulping nervously. This was extremely off-putting.

“Great. Anything else?”

“No, no- that’s... that’s it.” Dream felt like he was a child, learning to speak again. This was getting to be ridiculous.

“And your name?”

“Dream.”

“Dream?” George responds, pausing from where he was scratching the name on the cup with a sharpie.

“Yeah,” Dream says a little sheepishly. Usually, he said his name was *Ben* or *John* or something to avoid people looking at him strangely, but as he had been so distracted, he forgot to do so.

“Huh,” George tuts to himself, finishing the writing on the cup. “I like that. Sapnap! Take the register.”

Dream watched in wonder as George took the empty cup over to the far counter, where the various ingredients must be. Had he left the register just to make Dream’s drink?

Who must be Sapnap replaced George at the register, a guy with dark hair and a white headband and a head *full* of thoughts. Dream exhales in relief a little to know his abilities hadn’t randomly died off or something.

Sapnap had some very... funny thoughts in his mind.

*This guy is kinda cute. Major simp vibes, though.*

*I wonder if George would dump that tea on my head if I smacked his ass. That did happen last time I did that.*

*I think Quackity owes me five dollars.*

What... an array of thoughts.

Thankfully, Dream managed to *not* horribly embarrass himself again in the process of paying for his drink, a little more expensive than necessary and definitely more expensive than the coffee back at his apartment.

“Chai for Dream?”

And there was the voice, George’s voice, that drifted over the millions of other worthless sounds in Dream’s mind. Surely enough, Dream saw George behind the counter holding an iced chai latte, wide grin on his face. Maybe it was George’s job to be friendly and make coffees, but his heart fooled him enough to imagine that George was smiling a little brighter than he had for other customers.

“Thanks,” Dream says genuinely as he takes the cup from George’s hand. He tried not to think about the way their hands brushed, how it sent chills up his arms. What was *wrong* with him?

“No worries,” George says. And he laughs a little. Why was his laugh so cute?

It took Dream the entire walk from that cute, corner-of-the-street coffee shop to his morning class to realize something:

He *hated* tea.

## Chapter 2

### Chapter Notes

"'Cause it's not romantic, I swear  
I'm not gasping for air  
I want you to be here  
But please don't come near"  
- lyrics from the song Despair by Leo.

(this really sets the tone for the chapter lol)

### *Dream*

After over twenty years of living with himself, Dream has made a collection of discoveries regarding his telepathic abilities.

He could hear everyone's thoughts. No matter their native language, age, etc. He couldn't communicate with them as their thoughts, if in foreign languages, were translated into English in his own mind. There were no exceptions unless... well, someone was exceptionally stupid. He had met one boy in middle school who literally didn't have a single thought in his brain.

But after Dream met *George*, that cute, stupidly cute British barista?

That changed everything.

No, not because he was smitten over him or something equally ridiculous (well, not smitten *yet*, anyway). Because he couldn't hear any of George's thoughts. He seemed intelligent enough.

"So you're telling me that cute British dude... you couldn't read his mind at all?"

Dream musters enough energy to throw a glare at his roommate, Wilbur. See, Wilbur found out about Dream's psychic abilities on complete accident and may just be the only soul who knows about it aside from Dream's parents and his sister, Drista.

In addition to reading minds, Dream possessed some minor telekinetic powers, such as being able to summon objects to his hand, shut a door from across the room with the flick of his wrist. Small tasks like that.

Well, Wilbur *saw* Dream summon a pencil to his hand and after having a literal panic attack, Wilbur had sat in front of Dream, gripped him by the shoulders, looked in his eyes and said in a sinister voice, "*Dream, man, if you don't tell me all about your sexy super powers, I'm telling the feds about this.*"

And so, begrudgingly, Dream told Wilbur.

Every since then, the guy wouldn't leave him alone.

"Yes, I can't hear George's thoughts."

Wilbur hums in acknowledgement, taking a sip from his ceramic mug which was supposedly filled

with earl gray tea, but if his scattered, piratic mind was anything to go off of, that probably wasn't all there was in there. "Interesting. And you met him because I used up all the coffee beans?"

Dream thinks about that statement for a good few seconds. "I... guess that's what lead me to meeting him."

Wilbur gives him a toothy grin before he leans back, resulting in an even worse seated position than he had harnessed before: feet on the dining table, socked feet dangerously close to where Dream's arms rested on the surface, arms leaning on the back of his chair as well. "Hm. That's perfect, then, because I gave away the coffee maker."

If looks could kill, Wilbur would've died right then in record time.

"You did fucking *what*."

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It would be three weeks until Dream would receive another coffee maker.

It was absolutely ridiculous. He hated tea, and he also hated coffee, but he needed the caffeine to get his sleepy brain going for his classes.

So why, why in the *world* did Wilbur do such a thing?

*"Then you'll be forced to go to that coffee shop every morning for the next three weeks, right?"*

Oh, Dream was really going to kill him. But what made him really want to kill Wilbur was the thoughts in his mind were so assured, so certain that this would all work out in the end. Dream, on the other hand, knew better than to dream of futures with cute baristas who were resistant to telepathy.

However, after returning to the coffee shop the following morning, filled with people and their annoying morning thoughts and the little chalkboard sign near the entrance of the store with the seasonal special drinks written on it, Dream discovered that George did not work Tuesday mornings.

Despite being distraught that the entire visit, at least he made an order with ease this time as opposed to his past stammering and blubbering like he was some weak-willed teenage boy with a silly little crush.

He did make a few minor speculations, though: this barista, Sapnap as he heard George call him before, had messier handwriting, but seemed quite witty and made a decent latte. If Dream wasn't so interested in keeping himself as far away from humanity as possible, he might consider attempting to befriend him.

"See you tomorrow!" Sapnap calls after him cheerily, to which Dream replied with a jovial wave. Sapnap didn't deserve any sour attitude. Dream would reserve that for Wilbur, lord of destruction, who just *gave* away his precious coffee machine.

Unlucky for Dream, he had a difficult class to start his day. Some kind of lecture-based course that was courteous to his choice of being a computer science major. In fact, he wasn't sure of the exact description of this class: all he knew was that he needed its credits to graduate so he checked the box beside it.

(It wasn't like he actually needed to pay attention anyway. It was far more entertaining to listen to



the thoughts that would roam in and out of this professor's mind.)

But life hated Dream, apparently.

See, Dream liked routine. He liked to have his coffee in hand, to walk back to his usual seat, to open his laptop and notebook and ready himself for the long lecture period.

The universe decided to take a shit on that routine. Poor Dream.

"Hey!"

The guy nearly jumped out of his skin at the feeling of a hand on his shoulder. Call him skittish, but you can't blame him when he's used to hearing something of an alert which, in this situation, would be *I'm going to try to jump-scare this guy* whereas in that moment, he heard nothing.

Whirling around, Dream's brows were raised and his coffee was clutched tight in his hands as he looked over to see who this master scare-er was.

Oh.

It was George.

*The* George.

Cute barista George. Resistant to telepathy George.

Yeah, that one.

"Woah, sorry, didn't mean to scare you," George says with a laugh rolling off his lips in a subtly nervous manner. "At least you didn't spill your coffee, though."

"Uh," Dream stammers. George's eyes flicker to the cup that had the brand of the coffee shop printed on it, bold for the world to see. Dream gulps. He feels like this was a sign on his back that said "look, I'm an idiot, I'm the biggest, psychic dumbass in the world" as George raised his brows and looked back up to Dream.

"Did you go to the coffee shop this morning?" he drawls, hands ceasing their fidgeting with his hoodie sleeve and instead beginning to set his things down. Wait. Did that mean George wanted to sit next to Dream?

No, the universe *despised* him. The lecture hall was set up in a series of tables and benches that could technically fit two, but were plentiful enough to give each student their own. George could easily find a better seat. Why. *Why?!*

"I did," Dream confirms. "My roommate, he... broke the coffee machine back at my apartment." That wasn't exactly the truth, but it would do.

George's brows raise apologetically. "Oh. Well. I'm sorry to hear that." Effortlessly, he slips in to the seat beside Dream, as if he was completely oblivious to the absolute suffering he was bestowing upon the other man. Well, apparently not oblivious *enough* because he has the damn audacity to turn to Dream, eyes wide, hands already setting his computer on the table before saying, "is it alright if I sit here?"

"No," Dream blurts. George looks mildly offended. "I, I mean- no, it's- I don't mind." He clears his throat.

“So... I can sit here?”

Thankfully, George didn't sound hurt. He was clearly just teasing him by the snide look on his face, so smug and aware of what he was doing. Dream wanted to smack him.

“Yes, George, you can,” Dream heaves a comedic sigh. George laughs. Wow, Dream was beginning to like that laugh...

“Great,” George chirps, setting out his notes and opening up his computer.

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Dream would be quick to discover that his routine had gone to shit.

The only consistent parts of his life were in waking up to Wilbur opening the front apartment door at ungodly hours in the morning, intoxicated more often than not, mumbling something about a dude named Jared before disappearing into the bathroom where he would likely fall asleep in the bathtub.

What a bizarre guy.

After the small crumbs of interaction with George the previous day where George sat beside him in his main computer science class, Dream discovered that he had to learn the basics of human interaction from the bottom up as he no longer had voices in his head telling him what to do when it came to George. It was both exciting and positively terrifying.

Mind reading was more relevant to Dream's day-to-day life than you'd think. For instance, ordering a coffee. Or, when he meets with someone, he can read their mind to see whether or not they would prefer to be greeted by a hug or a handshake, or a simple wave. It made him seem incredibly intuitive to the people around him when, in truth, he was the exact opposite. That much was clear when he was with George.

But at the same time, George made it easy. Dream learned, just in the span of that lecture, that when George bumped Dream's elbow with his, it meant he was confused about something and hoped Dream caught the notes for it. Eventually, Dream did it back, bumping George's shoulder with his and whispering “*hey, not gonna lie, I completely zoned out for fifteen minutes. What the hell is he talking about?*” to which George had laughed and patiently explained the professor's discussion in a whisper before they both faded back into paying attention once more.

Even so, Dream was resentful to find himself waiting in line at that little coffee shop once again.

This time, Sappap wasn't there, but another guy with light brown hair and a wide, friendly smile. His name tag read “Dogwater” which he figured was a prank, but hey, sometimes parents got a little too creative with naming their kids.

Dream's question was soon answered as he heard this supposed “Dogwater's” voice in his head saying *I can't believe Sappap got me again.*

“Dream!”

A familiar voice snapped Dream to the present as he found himself at the front of the line holding a crumbled five-dollar bill.

“Oh, hi, George,” Dream says naturally. Progress. He didn't mess up his words this time, how impressive.

“Good to see you,” George says, already writing Dream’s name on a clear medium-sized cup. “The usual?”

“Yup,” Dream responds. “The usual” was an iced chai tea latte. Dream hated tea, and chai lattes. The flavors didn’t taste right to him. Too much at once.

“Great. That’ll be on the house.”

“What?” Dream marvels, already offering out his five dollar bill to George who, in turn, wasn’t taking it and stowing it away in the cash register.

“On the house,” George repeats, slipping towards the coffee machines where he would go to personally make Dream’s latte as usual, and he didn’t have to say anything for Dogwater guy to take his place. “What? It’s not your fault your roommate broke the coffee machine. You shouldn’t have to pay.”

“No, no, it’s fine,” Dream insists, but George had already closed out of the order on the cash register, and instead of the cash register reading the usual “\$4.50” it said “*welcome to The Corner Cafe!*”

Even as the next customer was taking Dream’s place to order, Dream managed to slip his five dollars into the tip jar when George wasn’t looking.

“See you in class tomorrow,” Dream says over his shoulder after he picks up his latte.

“Yup!” George says back before likely turning around and getting back to work.

Dream was halfway down the street, far enough away where he wouldn’t be seen committing the crime of dumping this repulsive latte into a trash can when he realized that George had written “have a nice day =)” instead of his name.

Dream sighed.

(In other words, he drank every last drop of that latte out of pure guilt and punishment to himself for being an idiot.)

## Chapter 3

### *George*

Despite being something of an extroverted introvert, George had never met anyone quite like Dream.

Maybe that was why he was so drawn to him.

It wasn't as if George was looking to get something from Dream, or searching for some ulterior benefit. He was simply inquisitive. Curious. Wanting to figure him out.

It didn't take a genius to deduct that Dream was a smart guy. George could tell from the very second he saw him, how Dream's eyes were calculating and predicting from how they scanned the prices on the chalkboard on the far wall of the cafe, or how he gazed upon the people around him. But the instant George spoke to him, he looked at him in surprise.

But he *really* looked at him. Dream could hold eye contact, something George didn't realize he wished for until that moment.

Don't get George wrong. This wasn't love at first sight. He wasn't in *love* with him. That would be so stupid...

There was something hidden in the way Dream slipped over his words as he seemed to *interested* in George in a way that made George feel more validated than he'd like to admit. He was so used to being in the periphery of someone's attention, used to saying something and not being heard the first time, which was *fine*.

But... it was nice to have someone's full attention for once.

Maybe that was why George suddenly turned sociable whenever Dream was around. Maybe that was why he found the confidence to just *sit* next to him without rehearsing exactly *how* he would ask Dream to sit next to him a million times in his head before ultimately rejecting the idea and sitting alone.

Maybe that was why George gave Dream a free drink to which, once Dream left the cafe, Karl rightfully smacked him over the back of the head and said *you're so dumb, man!*

Aside from that whole experience for the past few days, George had been getting by just fine. He was happy at this university, even if it was an ocean away from his family and home and other people with his own accent as well as people who didn't buy into this French-fry nonsense.

While being computer major proved to be relatively taxing, mentally and physically, George survived off of the late-night Minecraft with Sapnap and Karl and Quackity. And, after enough convincing from his friends, he ended up putting something in his schedule that wasn't so information-heavy to the point where he felt like his brain was being compressed into a computer chip.

So, he found himself in a music production elective.

(This fact will become relevant to the storyline very soon.)

Even if George didn't fit in with the appearances of the majority of this class, which was brightly-

died androgynous hair and eyeliner and killer fashion, he figured he had enough band kid blood in his veins to survive.

And now, for every student's nightmare: finding a place to sit.

"Psst, George."

Oh, and there was Dream, long strands of shiny, golden-spun hair tucked behind his ears, strands falling in his face like he was some sun-kissed prince with all these little freckles dancing on his cheeks and a pair of bright, daring, green eyes that taunted George to come closer if he dared.

And he did.

George gratefully made his way up the stairs and over to where Dream awaited him at a table likely suited for one, but they made it work as Dream scooted his things to the side to make room.

"Is it alright if I sit here?" George teases, reenacting their interaction not long ago.

Dream scrunches his nose at him as a way to say *very funny*. "No, actually," Dream says, crossing his arms and pretending to be upset, "it isn't alright. Shoo, barista man."

George rolls his eyes and sits down anyway.

The funny thing is, even when Dream was joking that he didn't want George with him, George had never felt more welcome.

And it had only been two days...

"So, why are you taking this elective?" George asks genuinely, seeing their professor must be running a few minutes late. He wasn't shocked, and neither was the rest of the class seeing as most of them were probably running on two hours of sleep and a Monster Energy.

Dream shrugs. "I dunno. I don't know much about music, so I thought I should learn about it."

George blinks at him. Who in the *world* just does things because they don't know about them? There was a fearlessness attached to that that George found himself very curious about.

"That's cool," George says simply, busying himself with setting out his notebook and computer. It was a little cramped at the table, enough so that if he leaned to the side, his and Dream's shoulders would bump.

"How about you?"

George throws him a wry grin. "Former band kid right here."

Dream gags. "Oh God. Get out. Now."

George just laughs at the irony as they were in a classroom surrounded with band kids. Dream was at a real disadvantage here. "Please, Dream. Don't come crying to me when you can't figure out what 'first inversion' or 'dominant seven' means."

Dream huffs. "Oh come on, now. How hard can it be?"

---

"Geoooooorge," Dream whines, face wedging further into his open notebook of notes from their computer science class, "please, *please* explain it one more time. Just one more time!"

“How hard can it be?” George mimics, scrunching his face and lowering his voice in an attempt to imitate Dream’s American accent. He throws Dream a sparing glance before he averts his attention back to the book in his class, with small words and too-close text describing the intricacies of coding. Currently, they were in the courtyard across from the convenience store. It was nice out here, cool enough to make George want a sweatshirt that he didn’t bring. The amount of nature was refreshing as there was a tree overhead, the thin green leaves fluttering down to land on the pages of his book and into Dream’s hair.

Dream was currently whining over the homework that had been assigned the previous week for their music production class, the same very class where he had ridiculed (okay, that was a bit of a dramatic adjective) George for being a band kind and proceeded to say that music would be easy for him to understand. Unsurprisingly, he was wrong.

“Please,” Dream says again, “please!”

“Jesus,” George says, looking up from his incredibly boring book, “I’ve explained it literally a hundred times.”

“Lih-trally,” Dream mimics back. George scowls at him. Dream’s brows raise in a quick, desperate apology,

“No, no wait, George, come on! I *need* you.”

George groans. “Just go to the professor. I’m sure she’ll explain it to you, *again*.”

“But it’s due tomorrow!”

George tuts, “sounds like a you problem, Dream.” Of course he would explain it to him. But first, he wanted to ride this wave of free entertainment.

“I’ll- pay for your coffee for a week,” Dream throws out. George sighs.

“I work at a cafe. I get a latte a day for free.” Sapnap always bent that rule a little and pushed it to something more like two or three lattes for free, but no one needed to know that.

“Uhhhh...” George looks up to see Dream staring intently at his papers in thought of what he could bribe George with. It was funny, really, that they had known each other for something like a week and a half now, but being with Dream already felt so natural. Even if their only interactions were sparse and surface-level, he felt like the potential to be something more, something *better* could grow.

“You’re cold,” Dream says as more of a statement as his eyes fell on George’s form, rubbing his arms up and down in a weak attempt to make the spreading goosebumps go away. George almost forgot about how incredibly observant Dream was.

“No I’m not,” he counters uselessly.

Dream chuckles and shakes his head a little, and George just returns him with a stubborn look. But then, Dream’s eyes light up mischievously. Oh no.

“What?” George sighs, head tilting a little in inquisition.

“I’ll tell you what,” Dream says. “I’ll give you my sweatshirt if you explain this to me. And *really* explain it to me.”

George opens his mouth to object as *no, that’s ridiculous, I’m running on one hour of sleep and*

*sheer determination. I'm not wasting my single braincell on this* but a taunting gust of wind breezed through the air, chill enough to run a cold rush through George's body, enough to make the hairs on his bare arms stand and his muscles tense in shivering.

Dream gives him that toothy, insufferable grin that basically said *I win*.

Wordlessly, Dream unzips the green hoodie, snakes his arms out of it, and tosses the thick folds of fabric in George's direction.

George wanted to hate how big the jacket was on him as it was proof that Dream was, in fact, quite taller than him (an ongoing argument between them of whether Dream was hugely taller than George, or just a little), but it was just so comfortable. The fabric was soft, and he was pleased to find that it was very warm. Warm enough, in fact, that his shivering ceased immediately. But worst (and best) of all, it smelled like cologne. Not like axe body spray or deodorant or something equally human, but like fucking *cologne*. The nice, misty, light kind.

And Dream had the goddamn nerve to *laugh* at how when George reached for his notes, he had to strain to get his fingers through the *sweater paw*.

"Shut up," George snaps, face burning.

"No no, keep reaching for the notes," Dream says snidely, shoulders jumping from his little snickering, "your little arms can't reach across this table, though."

"I'll kill you!" George exclaims, but all resolve fizzles away as he looks down to see Dream's face crinkling with laughter, and in this moment, he realized it was the first time he'd heard Dream laugh. Not the polite chuckle or a little snicker, but *really* laugh. He discovered that Dream's laughing was more of suffocating as he wheezed and squeaked and choked for air in a way that was far cuter than it should be.

George was laughing too, clutching the sweatshirt a little closer to himself than necessary.

For warmth purposes.

They're so helpless, aren't they?

## Chapter 4

### Chapter Notes

"I know where you've been  
Don't try to act like I don't know you  
And all the words you don't hear  
They always find a way back to you now"  
- lyrics from "Drunk on Halloween" by Wallows

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

### *Dream*

Music theory wasn't kind to Dream, but George was.

After the exchange of information for a jacket, George wasted no time getting right to business of explaining triads and major scales and minor scales, flats and sharps. Maybe most of it went in one ear and out the other, but even after just two times of meeting after class, Dream was already getting a better grapple on the subject matter of the lectures in class.

Because of all this time George seemed ready to devote to these impromptu meetings, Dream offered to pay him as a tutor. And, despite George's laughing and insistence that payment wasn't necessary, Dream was sure to tip him very generously for his morning lattes.

Aside from Wilbur, Dream didn't see hardly anyone outside of class nowadays. He'd go to classes, study in the library, and come back to his apartment for Wilbur to try and drag him out. This rarely worked.

Unfortunately, tonight was one of the nights where Wilbur succeeded.

"Come *onnn*," Wilbur drawls, buttoning up his trench coat and readjusting his glasses before deeming himself ready to step inside the torture place of a house party he had lead Dream to, "it'll be fun."

Dream shot Wilbur a look as even from many feet away from the bursting house, he could feel a terrible headache coming on. He couldn't even hear his own thoughts as everyone's drunk internal dialogues flooded his mind like a dam breaking.

"You alright, mate?" Wilbur inquires, genuine concern filling his eyes. Dream gulps.

He considered lying, but he didn't need to hear Wilbur's thoughts to know that he was genuinely worried.

"I might head home," Dream says, hands fidgeting in his sweatshirt pockets. Usually, fiddling helped him focus, but right now his brain was being pulled in so many different directions that he thought he might implode.

"Want me to come back with you?"

Dream is quick to shake his head as he knew Wilbur spent at least an hour on picking out an outfit



and fixing his hair for this party. Besides, Dream would be just fine with going home and watching some Marvel movies on his own.

Oh, yeah. Minor detail: Dream was a famous Minecraft Youtuber. Not to flex his *millions* of followers or anything, but to give the short answer, he didn't have trouble paying for college tuition. Despite being up to his neck in stress with such a difficult college major, he loved being a Youtuber as he couldn't read the minds of his audience. It was beautiful. All he had to listen to were Minecraft mobs and the robotic voice that read donations. He coped with all the noise in his head with that, and boy did it pay off.

But, back to the present, of Dream waving Wilbur off to go in that frat house on his own. Dream watched as Wilbur's tall form melted into the crowd of drunk, probably underage students nursing red cups and talking even louder than their internal voices.

Dream heaved a sigh. Another day, another failed social interaction.

Yet in the exact moment he turned on his heel to walk down the street to his apartment complex, he heard someone's thoughts in his head, someone's voice that sounded awfully familiar.

*George. George. George.*

See, when drunk people think, it isn't very straight forward. It's caveman talk, mostly, something like *get drink in mouth* or *where is woman*, so this wasn't surprising.

However, if Dream really focused, he could hear another voice saying a similar thing. *George. Drink. Lmao. What is he doing.*

Call him curious, or call him a simp, but Dream found himself marching right into that frat house. Why? Because supposedly, George was in there doing something stupid. He just wanted to make sure he was *okay*.

After shimmying between a collection of foul-smelling (and foul-thinking) frat guys, Dream managed to get to the center of the living room where the *real* party was at. A shitty boombox had been propped on top of the television, blaring some bass-boosted pop music that everyone sober enough to stand was absently swaying to. That much didn't matter, though. What mattered was that in the center of it all was George.

And he was *extremely* intoxicated.

"I would dance," George says, hands jumping animatedly, "but my legs are like. Rubbery. You know?"

Sure enough, Karl and Sapnap were on either side of him. George had managed to sit on the pingpong table, on the edge where it wasn't covered in opened chip bags and spiked punch bowls. Though they didn't seem half as intoxicated as their British friend, they seemed drunk enough to *giggle* at their friend's antics.

"Dream!" Karl exclaims, the first to notice him out of the three. Sapnap and George both perk up and look in Dream's direction in curiosity.

"My man!" Sapnap says with high energy as he pulls Dream into something of a bro hug, but was more of an awkward, sideways embrace. "What brings you here?"

"My roommate," he says, but minus the usual grumbling because if Wilbur hadn't dragged him here, he wouldn't have gotten to witness drunk George, who was quite entertaining.

“Ha!” George blurts, even though there was absolutely no part of that sentence that was funny. As Sapnap and Karl turn to him in question, he furrows his brows at them. “What? Don’t... don’t *look* at me like that, stop looking at me.”

“Is it just me, or is he more British when he’s drunk?” Karl murmurs to Sapnap, who actually nodded in agreement. Dream, as someone unfortunately yet entirely sober in this moment, could confirm that George was not *more British* when he was drunk.

“I’m not drunk,” George practically whines, lip jutting out as he actually pouted at Karl and Sapnap, who were lead into more intoxicated laughter at the sight of their friend. “I’m not! What’s so funny!”

“You’re *sooo* drunk,” Karl drawls, setting down his red cup ungracefully as plenty of the liquid sloshed to the side and onto George’s leg, who was still seated on the table.

“Karl!” George says with far more drama than necessary, “you spilled it! How *could* you?! You-you’ve made such a mess!”

“You’re being so dramatic,” Sapnap grumbles between bursts of laughter. Dream had to agree. George seemed to be very upset over the small spill of what seemed like beer on his thigh, darkening the color of his jeans.

“Now someone is going to have to clean it up,” George complains, “and my leg is all wet!”

“It’s as wet as your mom last night,” Karl says back, to which Sapnap actually *roars* with laughter. Even Dream had to laugh at that one.

“How dare you,” George slurs, brows drawn but lips raised in amusement as he shifted on the table to stand, “how dare you talk about having sex with my *mother*-”

Yet as soon as he stood, it seemed his legs were far more wobbly than he had predicted them to be. Once George got off his perch on the unused ping-pong table, his legs quivered a little and at the sudden weight applied to them, he inevitably fell forward. Karl and Sapnap, who were too busy discussing rather explicit things that Dream wished he didn’t have to hear the internal dialogue of too, didn’t notice their toppling friend until he was about to hit the floor. But thankfully, due to Dream’s quick reflexes, he caught George just in time.

Dream caught him by lunging forward and steadying his hands on George’s waist, resulting in George basically slumping into some kind of awkward, forced embrace.

“Oh,” George says simply, legs probably still unstable based on how tightly he gripped on Dream’s shoulders. “Wow. Aha. Didn’t know my legs were so wiggly.”

Dream snorts. “Wiggly?”

George nods, his hair brushing against the bare side of Dream’s neck. It sent a small chill up and down his spine. “George, I think it’s time you go home.”

“Nooo,” George whines weakly, yet he made no move to get out of where Dream was practically holding him up, “I need to... I was gonna prove that I can touch the ceiling! I told some tall Australian fucker that if I reached, I could touch the ceiling because I’m super super tall. Taller than you, even.”

He wasn’t making any sense, but Dream still smiled and nodded as if he understood what George was saying. His words were all slurring together into one incomprehensible mass of a sentence.

“Do you go to the gym?” George inquires suddenly as he’d moved on from just slumping on Dream to practically draping himself around him. Sober George didn’t seem, well, *this* fond of touch, so who would’ve thought he’d be so clingy when drunk? But, if Sapnap’s drunk thoughts were anything to go off of, this wasn’t a rare occurrence.

“Yes..?” Dream answered as more of a question than an answer. George huffs.

“That makes sense.”

What the fuck does *that* mean?

Thankfully, Karl and Sapnap’s shenanigans interrupted that thought process as somehow, Karl managed to spill his drink *again* and directly on George at that. Maybe it was because he seemed to be tripping on his own feet, or maybe it was due to the fact he was trying to slow-dance with Sapnap to a bass-boosted party song while they were both drunk with drinks in their hands, but the ending result was the fact that George had a drink spilled on his shirt.

“Aww, I wasn’t finished with that,” Karl says absently, setting his now-empty cup down on the edge of the table. To Dream’s mild surprise, George didn’t seem angry, or even annoyed. He looked so out of it that he just snorted, wiggling out from under Dream’s embrace and analyzing the big stain across the front of his light gray hoodie.

“Hm,” he inquires. “Welp, time to strip, I guess-”

“No!” Dream exclaims at the same time Sapnap shouts, “woo yeah! Lemme get my cash!”

(Long story short, Dream stopped George from humiliating himself. Sapnap tried to stop Dream, but his attempts were weak and drunken.)

“I think it’s time for you to go home,” Dream eventually says with a sigh.

“Why?” George has the audacity to ask.

“Come on,” Dream says, stringing one of George’s arms around his shoulder as he knew, despite the other’s stubborn protests, there was no way he’d be able to walk all the way back to his apartment. He couldn’t even walk a few feet without tripping on his untied laces or merely teetering dangerously until he fell over. He was either the biggest lightweight or had had a *lot* to drink.

George was muttering something, it was more of babbling really, but Dream couldn’t tell what he was saying. All he knew was that George was complying to go back to his apartment as Dream half-dragged him through the sweaty, intoxicated crowd of frat boys and sorority girls and the occasional socially outcasted kid trying to fit the scene.

“My shirt is itchy,” George complains, his face nestling in Dream’s neck. Yeah, Dream was *definitely* just dragging him now. “I wanna take it off.”

“Not yet,” Dream huffs, trying to keep George upright. It was futile. “You’ll be cold.”

“Your *mom* will be cold.”

“Wha-hut?” Dream says through confused laughter, brows raising as he tried to get at least a grain of sense out of his intoxicated friend. Instead, he was met with the expression of someone who was very drunk, and very tired.

That was exactly what coerced Dream into pausing, squatting down a little, hooking his arm under

George's knees and actually scooping him up.

George was silent for a good few seconds, probably trying to understand why his feet were no longer on the ground until he caught Dream's gaze. "You're like... a prince."

Dream pretends his face doesn't heat up embarrassingly quickly as instead he huffs and looks ahead. His feet were the only sound other than George's slow breaths, the cool, dark atmosphere serving as a relaxing setting. Dream had never been afraid of the dark or walking alone merely because it was impossible to creep up on him. That is, unless you're a random British barista. George was an enigma that Dream was willing to take time to figure out. Maybe he'd never figure him out, but he was sure having fun trying to.

The rest of the walk was uneventful other than the flickering street lamp that George seemed fascinated with. In fact, it seemed like the closer they got to the apartment, the drunker George became. "It's like a firefly," George had slurred. "A big firefly."

"Definitely," Dream blatantly lied.

The true challenge, however, was trying to get George to go in his goddamn bed. Getting him to change his own shirt was challenging enough as he kept saying *I'm a stripper, Dream, let me do my job* until he finally gave up. But this was a true challenge.

"Dreeeeeeaaaaaam," came the shrill whine across the apartment. See, Dream had never actually been inside of George's apartment as they weren't necessarily on come-over-to-my-apartment terms yet. It was small, cozy, and very George from what Dream could tell: the desk across from his unmade bed had a large and relatively nice gaming PC that Dream would have to ask him about later, and the shelves were bursting with books and plants, the cute kind with their wispy, wild leaves and also baby succulents littered around his bedside table. The main area of the apartment was bland but homey, empty but used mugs gathered in the sink and a stray, abandoned fork laying on the counter.

"Yes, George?" Dream says, closing out of his phone and glancing upward. It seemed that George's voice had drifted from the bathroom where he had disappeared into.

"Carry me." Dream tried so hard not to die laughing at the thought of George waking up in the morning remembering how utterly ridiculous he acted tonight.

"What, are you some damsel?" Dream says in amusement as he nudges open the bathroom door with his hip. He blinks a little at the sudden brightness of the bathroom as opposed to the dim lighting of the rest of the apartment. It must be extremely late at this point, maybe even past the midnight mark.

George gives him a look from where he was putting his toothpaste back in its rightful place. His lids drooped over his eyes and his limbs looked heavy as he must be really quite tired.

"I hope I get really sad," George says with a small sigh. Dream's brows furrow in return.

"What?"

"So I'll have an excuse to like, sit in the shower. With my clothes on," George insists, as if his slurred words made complete sense as he motions to the half-shower half-tub to the other side of the bathroom.

"That does kinda sound like an aesthetic I could use," Dream admits as he imagines himself sitting down in the shower, clothes soaking and heavy, water trickling down his face. A little dark and

brooding for his liking, maybe.

In turn, Dream gave in (but not after much teasing to George) as he assumed their earlier position of his arm hooked under George's knees and George practically falling asleep in his arms before Dream even got to his bed.

Once Dream set George on his bed, he left shortly after as George was fighting sleep too much to persuade Dream to stay with him and make him food like he had forced him to do earlier. George was so needy when he was drunk, but it was still endearing somehow.

Dream ended up stumbling through the dark of his apartment around two in the morning, and the last thing he heard was Wilbur, who of course was awake, saying "was the sex good?"

Dream hoped his door slamming right in Wilbur's face answered the question.

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"How's the hangover? Wanna talk some more about my muscles and how I go to the gym?"

Dream quips to George, who had his hood pulled over his head and his eyes looking as if he'd seen the ends of the earth as he took his seat beside Dream in their computer science class. George meets Dream's shit-eating grin with an unimpressed glare.

"Fuck off," George says, yet the laugh is audible through his voice.

Silently, Dream slides his untouched chai latte to George, who didn't work these mornings, so by the looks of it, hadn't gotten his coffee.

Dream figured George bumping his knee and grinning broadly before gulping the whole thing down was his hungover form of a thank you.

(However, George must've been really, really tired as later on he felt a head droop and rest on his shoulder, but the truly comedic part was how flustered and embarrassed George was once he woke up a short duration later.)

## Chapter End Notes

ngl Wilbur is my favorite character here

## Chapter 5

### Chapter Notes

"Often I am upset  
That I cannot fall in love, but I guess  
This avoids the stress of falling out of it"  
- lyrics from "This is Home" by Cavetown

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

### *George*

A month passed by faster than it should've.

Such mundane activities seemed to gather meaning since Dream stumbled his way into George's daily routine. For instance, keeping on that customer-friendly smile during his early shift at the Coffee Corner used to be an area of dread. However, since Dream has been coming by every morning, his previously faked smiles now were genuine.

Although, one morning stood out from the rest.

Customers flooded the small corner cafe right around eight o'clock as usual, filing up with their paragraph-long orders where they would go Karen-mode if George asked them to repeat themselves. George had memorized how his shifts went nowadays: he'd do his best to keep up with the eight o'clock rush, and by around nine-thirty, a familiar, tall, lanky figure would grace the doorway, his bright eyes scanning the room before they settled on George's tired face.

The funny thing was at first Sapnap and Karl would tease him for immediately making his way to the register to be the one to take down his order, tell him it's on the house and pretend not to notice the generous bill being slipped into the tip jar, but after this fact became routine, Sapnap and Karl hardly batted an eye at it.

"Hi," George greets as he watches Dream step up to the register. George had memorized the way Dream's eyes flickered over rooms, analyzing, yet when George caught his attention, they would settle on his face.

"Hi," Dream returns, already pulling his wallet out of his pocket.

"The usual for you, I'm guessing?" George says, as it was more of a statement than a question as he found himself writing "For Dream" on the portion of the cup where he was supposed to write the order (yet ever barista at this shop already knew what "For Dream" meant) and put a smiley-face where the name was supposed to go.

"Actually.." George perks up, yet dampens a little as he sees the borderline nervous look on Dream's face as he fiddled with the zipper on his wallet. George raises a brow at him.

"Well, George, you see, the thing is-" Dream bites his lip as he meets George's eyes again. He looked contemplative, as if he didn't know whether he should let George in on some kind of secret.

"Go on," George urges, half-aware of the long line of impatient, caffeine-deprived people waiting

behind him.

“I actually... don’t like tea.”

George’s jaw drops dramatically as at first, he was going to chastise his poor taste. But then it dawned on him.

“Wait... so when I gave you a chai latte every morning... you didn’t like it?”

Dream gave him a short nod.

George partially felt terrible because suddenly, the torn look on Dream’s face every time George asked for his order was now making a lot of sense. However, George’s reaction was to burst into boisterous, unapologetic laughter. He hadn’t laughed this hard in ages.

“Dream- you- you are such an idiot!” Dream looked a little stunned at the reaction, yet his lips were quirking upward in a way that George knew was amusement. “Why didn’t you *say* anything?! I’ve been giving you that latte for, like, a month!”

Dream gives off a nervous chuckle as he scratches the back of his neck. “...my bad?”

That only leads George to laughing harder and harder until he waved Dream aside and excused himself from the register to let Karl take over once more. “Oh my God. You’re such an-”

“Idiot?” Dream answers. He was leaning on the counter where George deposited the finished drinks and called out the names of the order. All that separated their faces was a thin sheet of glass, and a thick layer of internalized homophobia.

“Just- wait there, I’ll make you something I think you’ll like. You don’t like coffee either, right?”

“It’s gross,” Dream attempts to justify. George makes a face at him.

“You’re impossible.”

It turns out he wasn’t, however, because as soon as George slid over a cup and said “for Dream!”, the contents of the drink were enough to make Dream’s eyes widen and his hands tighten on the cup before promptly taking another swig of it.

“Well?” George asks gingerly, wiping his hands on his black apron, “what do you think?”

“Holy shit,” Dream says, smiling enough that his teeth showed, “what is *in* this thing?”

“Chocolate, almond milk, espresso, and a little bit of cinnamon,” George says with a proud smile. “I know you said you didn’t like coffee, but I thought this would do the trick.”

“George,” Dream responds, leaning forward enough on the counter so that his face could be closer to George’s. Not the suffocating kind of close, but close *enough* that George could count the freckles on his cheeks and the bridge of his nose. “Make this my regular, alright?”

“Will do.”

George watched Dream leave the coffee shop, and probably waved goodbye to him five separate times, yet didn’t take his eyes off of him until he watched Dream disappear behind the corner.

In return, Karl frankly smacked him across the back of his head with an unused rag.

He deserved that.

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It wasn't until another three-and-a-half weeks later that they received a serious assignment for their music production elective.

Before, it had been simple homework, such as listening to an album, identifying different musical techniques and coming to class ready to discuss them. Yet, after months of avid study of what other artists were doing in their music, naturally, they were being asked to try and replicate this.

As this project was allowed to have partner work, Dream and George obviously gravitated to one another. They started off slow, gathering music and making playlists based on artists they wanted to capture the vibe of, or types of moods they wanted to display. They didn't need to make a song that was beautiful, or interesting, even. It was merely an example of their learning through the class. But Dream? He was determined to make something good.

This is exactly how this project was swallowing up all of George's time.

Eventually, they lead from sending playlists and artists to exchanging Discords and staying up late trying to think of a single melody or lyric. As that seemed to be too much to tackle, they came up with a drum beat.

Knocking on the front door of Dream's apartment was a lot more nerve-wracking than it needed to be.

Even as he heard a familiar voice, muffled by the wall, saying "come in, it's unlocked", he still felt the nervousness all the way down to his fingertips.

But as soon as he opened that door and looked inside, he felt the nervousness leave his body, replaced with that calm sensation that came with Dream's presence. Because it was a weekend, Dream was dressed a lot more casually than his usual jeans and shirts; it was an interesting change in scene. The apartment wasn't remarkable, nothing above average for a college student, but it was nice. George was surprised (and amused) to find a perfectly functioning coffee machine sitting on the counter as, with a swelling heart, he realized this machine must've been replaced weeks ago, yet Dream continued to spend his mornings at the Coffee Corner.

The rest of that Saturday night was a blur; playing Minecraft on Dream's Xbox, procrastinating on working on their project and settling for Kraft mac-and-cheese for dinner. George found himself on Dream's couch the following morning, blanket thrown haphazardly across him, legs strewn over Dream's lap and face pressed into the couch cushions.

George would rather not describe the little flip his heart did when he saw Dream laying there, arms wrapped around himself, eyes closed and expression calm as his chest rose and fell with steady breaths.

The next time they met up to work on their project was later into the night. George had taken Quackity's night shift at the cafe as he had a big exam the following morning. The glass door of the cafe had a big "sorry, we're closed!" sign hung across it, yet Dream and George still remained. Dream had stayed with him for most of the latter half of George's shift, whether that was continuously ordering things even though George would laugh and say *how are you still hungry?* or by sitting at one of the tables and studying for other classes. Once the store was officially closed and George went about counting the money in the register and wiping down the tables, Dream began to talk George through the next steps of their project.



“Do you think we should add a drum fill here?” Dream inquires as he plays out a small clip of their work so far. George hums with thought as he strains to set a mug on the top shelf of displayed clay mugs above the coffee machines.

“Yeah, put it in, let’s see how it sounds.”

However, George had been in the middle of taking off his apron and hanging it on the hook behind him when *it* happened.

It was very sudden, really, all the noises and feelings at once, hitting him hard. He didn’t process what happened, not as he felt something grip him and practically shove him to the ground with a cried out “look out!” that he didn’t say. Following this, there were sounds of glass shattering, the noise sounding like little glass stars falling from the sky and breaking upon contact.

George opened his eyes to see the scene: Dream had leapt onto George and gotten him to duck down to shield himself from the whole wall of shattered glass that was now spread across the floor of the place. George groaned slightly as the impact of being slammed onto the hard ground of the cafe wasn’t comfortable, yet he looked up at Dream incredulously. Dream lifted his head, and for a moment, they merely looked at each other without the will to move. Time seemed to stop as realization hadn’t yet sunk into George’s distracted mind. Dream’s weight kept George pinned, and as they looked at each other, realization seemed to finally settle. If Dream so much as twitched, their noses would be touching.

“Sorry,” Dream mutters bashfully as he practically scrambles to get off of George, who breathes a hasty “it’s fine” before the two of them get their shit together enough to stand and peer over the counter to see what the hell caused the entire display of glass to shatter.

The answer was a drunk driver, apparently, as the driver seemed just as disoriented as they were. It seemed this driver had driven their car over where they intended to park, through onto the sidewalk and right into the window of the shop.

Even as they settled the situation by recording the license plate number and notifying the police of what occurred, George still had one question he was hesitant to ask:

How was it that Dream knew to tackle George out of the way before the car even hit the glass?

George would find that even if he mustered up the courage to ask this, he would be interrupted by his own thoughts as his eyes landed on Dream’s hand. How had he not noticed it before?

“You’re bleeding,” George said in what was meant to be accusatory, but was really just concerned. Dream opens his mouth, but George talks before he could give some half-assed excuse. “Wait here, I got this.” The wound seemed shallow and mostly painless, but that didn’t stop George from going in the back room of the coffee shop to fish out the unused first aid kit. Despite this entire incident having taken place less than a half hour ago, George was doing okay. A little shocked was all, yet overwhelmingly thankful for Dream’s inhumanly quick reflexes and selflessness to throw himself in the face of danger in order to ensure George’s complete safety.

The coffee shop was currently occupied with various police officers assessing the scene and occasionally asking Dream or George of a general description of the driver, what kind of car they had, around what time they hit the glass. Nothing too serious, but the officers asked that Dream and George remained in the shop while they figured this all out.

So, George took his seat beside Dream once again, in one of the cozy booths to the far side where no glass had spread over to. Once seated, George looked over at the small bundle of officers, one

equipped with a notepad and scrawling down what must be a description of the scene. It seemed they hadn't progressed any more than when they arrived. George inwardly groaned. It seemed this was going to be a long night.

With little hesitance and much determination, George picked up Dream's hand with both of his own and turned it over to thoroughly assess the injuries. As he suspected: shallow, and only needing of a bandage.

"George, it's fine, really," Dream insists, but George shakes his head stubbornly.

"Hold still," George says back, "this might sting a little." As he dabbed the rubbing alcohol on the shallow cut, he didn't miss how Dream's hand twitched and how Dream winced a little, yet as George brushed his thumb along Dream's palm, the twitching and discomfort seemed to dissipate. He then wrapped Dream's hand up with gauze three times before tying it off with a small bow.

Dream's hand was nice to hold. Warm, big, comforting. George wondered if he hugged like so.

"Thanks," Dream says, snapping George back to reality. Sheepishly, George lets go of his hand and busies himself with setting the small bottle of rubbing alcohol and the winding of gauze back into the medical bag.

"Thanks for saving me like that," George says back. *How did you know to, though?*

Dream opens his mouth, about to likely say *it's no big deal*, yet was interrupted by a distant, familiar voice saying "George!"

Perking up at the sound of his name, George's eyes left Dream's dimly lit face and to the area of where his name was coming from. Sure enough, he saw her: Jade, with her shoulder-length dark hair bouncing as she bounded toward him. Her heeled shoes click-clacked against the pavement and her dress swayed with movement, yet she weaved her way around the policemen saying "ma'am, can you state your business here?"

Jade immediately threw herself onto George to envelope him into a hug. Jade did give nice hugs, even if George wasn't so into physical contact a lot of the time. He liked how when he wrapped his arms around her waist, she'd nestle closer to him, or how he could smell her hair when he rested his chin on top of her head. She was four inches shorter than him, the perfect height to just squeeze into his arms.

Although, George was really beginning to wonder what it would be like to have this kind of hug with someone who was taller, broader than him, and didn't smell like artificial flowers but like summer time.

(That was aside the point, though.)

"Jade," George returns enthusiastically as after one final squeeze to her shoulder, he let go. She looked up at him with her usual smile that was now accompanied with great worry. "What are you doing here?"

"I was worried about you," Jade says immediately, and though they had let go of their embrace, she took one of his hands in her own. Something George had always admired about Jade, from the day they had bumped into each other on campus a few months back, was her ability to be transparent and confident with her emotions. "After you texted me with what happened, I had to come over and make sure you were alright... oh, someone was with you?"

George nods slowly as he becomes acutely aware of Dream, standing there awkwardly in a way

that looked as if he didn't know what to do with his own limbs. "Yeah! Jade, this is Dream, my friend."

"Ohh," Jade says, letting go of George's hand to hold hers out to Dream. "So *you're* the Dream George tells me about. Well, nice to meet ya! I'm Jade, George's girlfriend."

(No, audience. This isn't a trick. This isn't the type of girlfriend that has the platonic space between "girl" and "friend." We're talking dating, lovey-dovey, *girlfriend* girlfriend.)

"Nice to meet you," Dream says with a poorly hidden bitterness.

George had a pit in his stomach that definitely wasn't there before.

Falsely, he figured this was out of disorientation from the situation he just endured.

He would quickly discover this wasn't the case as he watched his girlfriend and his friend shake hands. Call this the beginning of a war George would find himself at the heart of.

## Chapter End Notes

idk about y'all but I think it's cute that Dream keeps coming to the cafe after his coffee machine was replaced..

## Chapter 6

### Chapter Notes

"You just need a better life than this,  
you need something I can never give"  
- lyrics from "Heat Waves" by Glass Animals

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

#### ***Dream***

*What the fuck.*

More of a statement than a question, yet it was the only viable thought available in Dream's mind at that given moment.

What, was this life's cruel way to say *oh? You thought you could actually have a chance with this guy? Nice try!*

Dream was so disoriented and so damn *tired* that he felt a flood of emotions all at once. For someone who wasn't ever surprised about anything, he didn't know how to handle this newfound information; Jade was irritatingly perfect for George, and the thoughts in her head reflected such. She didn't have any flickers of judgement in her mind as she held out her hand for Dream to shake unlike a good portion of humanity. Most people, at this stage, would be sizing Dream up in a not-so-positive way, so one can imagine how Dream struggled as an insecure teenager. People's minds are relentless and can capture details even the person themselves hasn't detected.

But not Jade. Jade was kind. And it *sucked*.

The only words going through her head were *is George okay? He seems okay* and *thank goodness for this friend of his! I wonder if George would have gotten hurt otherwise...*

Oh yeah, there's that small detail. See, a fact of keeping mind control capabilities a secret is that it is incredibly hard, morally and otherwise. For instance, even if Dream *knows* someone is going to rob a bank, he can't stop them. He has to act just as shocked as everyone else. However, if he's overheard more serious matters where people sound as if they might injure someone else, he always tried his best to interfere in indirect ways.

The point is, Dream slipped up. He tackled George out of the way of the shattering glass meters before the car even came close to hitting the window merely because he heard the drunk thoughts of the driver getting louder and louder as they got closer and closer.

Why? Because Dream couldn't stand the thought of watching a wall of glass shatter around George. He could stomach the image of his blood on his hands, literally, even if the wounds weren't unbearable. It was becoming increasingly apparent that George was Dream's weakness.

George seemed impressed by his quick reflexes, but overall confused by them. That was fine. George could go on thinking that Dream had insanely fast reaction time and not come to the conclusion that Dream has telepathic abilities.

But what *wasn't* fine was the fact that George had a *perfect* girlfriend.

Dream shakes her hand.

“Nice to meet you,” Dream responds. He was aware that he gripped her hand a little too hard, and his smile was a little too strained. His other hand still stung a little from the wound that George had graciously fixed up for him.

How was it that Dream had carried this man home while he was drunk off his ass, visited him every morning to get a coffee, and it hadn't slipped that oh yeah, he had a girlfriend?

For months, apparently?

Thankfully, the policemen wrapped up with the scene after another rather long twenty minutes as the situation was relatively self-explanatory. Dream didn't think he could handle another second of sitting at this table with George and Jade sitting beside him, a hardly platonic space between them and a whole lot of thoughts from Jade that he did *not* need to know. This had to be the highest form of torture, hearing about the guy he was somewhat interested in— not to date, or anything, Dream just found George intriguing (this is denial, by the way)— via the thoughts of said guy's girlfriend. That has to be the cruelest thing imaginable.

“Might I suggest crying your feelings out?” Wilbur had suggested once Dream managed to escape that nightmare of a scene. By the time he shut the front door of the apartment behind him, it was around a half hour past midnight. Unsurprisingly, Wilbur was awake and sitting on the couch in the main room of the apartment. The apartment was laid out in three sections: the far right, which was Dream's room, the middle, where there was a small kitchen and couch and television, and the left, where Wilbur's room was. They shared a bathroom which, normally, wasn't an issue until Wilbur decided to drunkenly fall asleep in the bathtub. This sounded fine, but see, when Dream was trying to use the bathroom and his roommate popped out at him, it always gave him quite a scare. Even with mind-reading capabilities.

“Crying my feelings out?” Dream echoes, brows raised in what was a clearly skeptical expression.

“Yeah,” Wilbur quips, “it might be good for you. When's the last time you cried?”

Dream has to think about that one as he slumps onto the couch beside his roommate. “I can't remember. A few years ago, maybe?” Actually, the last time he had cried was three years ago. Eighteen years old, the night before his high school graduation. They weren't tears of sadness, but tears of frustration. Frustration with himself.

Wilbur sighs heavily and offers the ice cream carton he had been holding to Dream who, despite his dislike of sharing ice cream cartons, found himself too tired to get a bowl. “I don't even know if I'm into him like that,” Dream starts, scrapping relentlessly at the bottom of the ice cream carton. This flavor was too good to be legal. “I've never been... into... well, you know...”

“Never liked a guy before?” Wilbur finishes for him. Dream catches his gaze in the light of the television, and watched how it flickered in his dark eyes. Dream didn't have to read Wilbur's thoughts to know what he was thinking: Dream knew himself less than he thought. As much as he hated to admit it, he had to agree.

Mutely, Dream nods, yet Wilbur doesn't pry. That's what Dream has always admired about Wilbur: he doesn't pry when he doesn't need to. When people draw a line, he looks at it, and doesn't cross it. Even when Wilbur found out about Dream's abilities, he didn't seem to care much merely because he didn't have anything to hide. That didn't stop the questions, though, of *what's*

*she thinking about right now? and can you teach me how to do it?*

“Don’t let him go, mate,” Wilbur says as simply as that. He redirects his attention back to the TV. “This George, he clearly makes you happy. Who gives a shit if you want to marry him or just be around him? Don’t let him go.”

There was something ominous about that.

*He clearly makes you happy.*

*Don’t let him go.*

Dream was trying his best to will his slipping hands to hold on just a bit longer.

If George wanted to be let go of, that would be the end of it. But George was still holding on, so Dream could only do the same.

---

It was as if the universe had some kind of sick vendetta against Dream. Like it had discovered this new weapon of George’s girlfriend and really milked it, taunting Dream to lash out. But he couldn’t. Not when he would arrive at the cafe corner just as Jade was leaving with a cup in her hand that, with a twist to his heart, he noticed had a little heart where her name usually be written. The order was titled as *For Jade* and Dream was becoming painfully aware that that wasn’t his and George’s *thing*. George was just a nice person.

Once Jade had wormed her way into Dream’s life, there was no escaping her.

He noticed her in the most obvious and obscure of places: every Tuesday, she got out of her pottery elective early, and when George and Dream would be exiting their lecture hall, she’d get up from the bench she’d be waiting on with a wide grin and an extended hand for George to take in his. Every time, they offered Dream a spot at their table where they ate lunch. And every time, Dream made up some stupid lie. *I have to study. Wilbur is drunk and I need to pick him up. My cat threw up.*

But here’s the silver lining: Dream was making new friends. He couldn’t go a day without spammed Discord notifications from Quackity, or meme exchanges from Sapnap, or song recommendations from Karl. Actually, the instant Dream introduced Karl to Wilbur was the day the world imploded as the amount of playlists they exchanged was ungodly. Around seven each evening, Dream would head over to George’s place where they would work on their music production project for an hour, a half hour if they were feeling lazy. Dream was accustomed to usually having meager interactions with other students in his classes, the usual hang-outs with Wilbur or the late nights where the only being he had to talk to was Patches, his cat. So, admittedly, this was a nice adjustment.

But he hated how coincidental it was that, as soon as he met Jade, she seemed to appear in every single one of these settings.

One night, Dream, Karl, Sapnap, Quackity, George, and Wilbur had gathered at George and Sapnap’s place for a game night. Originally, it was going to be a Minecraft and Super Smash Bros tournament-type night, yet with Jade’s presence came her stack of board games.

“Come on, guys,” she had begged, “I know these look boring but I promise it’s actually really fun.” The infuriating thing is that the games *were* actually really fun. And she was really good at them. In fact, she handed Dream’s ass to him every time he went against her, and it was the most horrible

thing ever.

Well, almost as horrible as how she so casually slipped George's arm around herself. Wilbur's sympathetic pat to Dream's shoulder was enough to know that he didn't imagine how lovingly they looked at each other.

*Can't they leave already? I need to make out, like, right now.*

Dream inwardly groaned. It was in the moment of listening to the following stream of Jade's thoughts that he decided that yes, the universe had a nasty vendetta against him.

---

"I'm gonna die alone," Dream wails miserably to no one in particular other than Patches who laid unimpressed in his lap. His headphones sat looped around his neck after just taking them off. He ended stream moments ago, voice still cheerful as he said *bye everyone! Thanks for supporting the stream, I hope you all had a good time watching* before he terminated the stream, slipped off his headphones, and exhaled in relief as he didn't have to keep up that persona for an instant longer.

Patches meowed at him absently, her ears perking at the sound of Dream setting his headphones back on his desk, leaning his head back on his chair, and exhaling with more drama than necessary.

Running a hand through his unkempt hair that probably needed a wash, Dream gave off a small, less pronounced sigh and looked at the scene that was his room. His PC was still on an running, urging him to jump back into the game of Minecraft he had previously been engaging in, yet his room was a cry for help with the shirts strewn on the floor, or the blinds that remained closed, or the unmade bed with blankets spilling over the edges. It was like some sad kind of cave with the only source of light being the glow from his computer.

About to move Patches off of him to do some tidying, Patches glances up at him with a practiced (but still effective) pair of pleading eyes. Dream chuckles, immediately giving in as he says "oh, alright. You can have some treats." His usual response when he was alone was to hold out his hand and draw the bag of treats to it as there was no one there to freak out and say *holy shit that dude just summoned a bag of cat treats to his hand*. So, as one with mild telekinetic powers does, he summoned the bag to his hand with a practiced control so that it didn't fly across his room and slam into his awaiting palm, but instead drifted over gracefully, where he poured out a few for Patches to enjoy. She purrs with appreciation as he gives her ear one last scratch before he decidedly got to his feet to be responsible for once.

Yet before he could do so, he heard a distinct clattering sound behind him. He jumped at the noise.

In surprise, Dream whirled around to find the source, figuring an object fell from his shelf, or Wilbur was doing something stupid.

Instead, he saw George, who had dropped the can of soda he had been holding. His eyes were wide, shifting, disbelieving; his mouth hung open and all of a sudden, he looked extremely pale.

"Fuck," Dream blurts, as there was no other word to fit the situation. There was no point in waving a pendulum in front of the guy's face in hypnosis or attempting to pull some type of Jedi Mind Trick out of his ass. George had saw him, and Dream was fucked.

"George, listen," Dream starts, but it seemed the words hadn't reached George yet. They never would, apparently, because instead of responding or walking off, George's lids fluttered until they

closed, his legs quavered and, frankly, he fainted.

Maybe it was due to exhaustion, maybe it was due to stress. Or maybe it was due to the fact he witnessed fucking *telekinesis* on a Thursday evening.

It wasn't even anything impressive. Just Dream summoning some *cat treats*.

"Oh my God," Dream breathes, limbs rushing forward to attempt to catch George before he hit the ground, and just barely making it there in time. He managed to fit his hands onto the small of George's back to prevent him from hitting his head on the ground as he'd hate for the poor guy to have passed out *and* given himself a concussion.

Sure enough, with enough hoisting and effort, Dream secured George in his arms, which proved quite difficult as his limbs were fluid and entirely limp. It was like trying to gather a self-aware mass of jello in his arms, yet he managed to accomplish it somewhat.

You're probably thinking, *oh, this can't get any worse*.

But it can.

*So much worse.*

On cue, someone else pushes through the front door, and it wasn't Wilbur. It was Jade who, now that Dream thought about it, probably accompanied George to hang out with Wilbur and everyone as Dream had completely forgotten about how they agreed to work at his apartment on the project. Based on the case of delightful cupcakes Jade held in her hands, he guessed she was bringing snacks over for them to enjoy.

But instead of seeing the scene of her boyfriend and his good friend who definitely wasn't analyzing her for any sources of malicious intent working on their project, she saw this said "good friend" hoisting up her boyfriend in his arms in a way that, from as far away as the front door to the doorway of Dream's room, looked *very* suggestive and *very* wrong.

Similarly to how her boyfriend dropped his soda, Jade dropped the case of homemade cupcakes. Her thoughts were buzzing by so quickly that Dream couldn't even decipher them.

"It's not what it looks like!" he blurts quickly, "I swear!" The heat was rushing to his face in utter humiliation.

"What the fuck are you doing to him?!" Jade shouts at him, and despite being almost an entire foot shorter than him, Dream was very intimidated.

"I didn't do anything!" Dream shouts back. "He just, like- fucking fainted!"

Jade's million-miles-per-minute thoughts slowed temporarily as her eyes softened on the gaze of her boyfriend in his friend's arms, eyes drifted closed in a not-very-peaceful expression.

"He *has* been really exhausted lately," Jade reasons, no longer yelling, thankfully. *I know*, Dream wanted to say, *I know him just as well as you do*.

That's how Dream and Jade ended up working together, Jade fluffing up the couch and Dream gently setting George there.

Despite excusing himself to get George a glass of water, he could still hear Jade's flurry of thoughts. Even though there was quite an array of them, there was one in particular that stuck with him:



*Dream's obsession with George is kind of bizarre.*

## Chapter End Notes

me: \*has plans to villainize Jade\*

also me: \*falls in love with her\*

FUCK

## Chapter 7

### Chapter Notes

"We've got to find other ways to make it alone  
but keep a straight face  
And I've always lived like this,  
keeping a comfortable distance"  
- lyrics from "The Only Exception" by Paramore

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

### *George*

It was safe to say that George wasn't accustomed to fainting.

Actually, he'd never fainted before, so naturally, he was a little alarmed to find himself laying on a couch that he was fairly certain didn't belong to him. His head was pounding as he first opened his eyes to see the out-of-focus scene of... was this Dream's apartment?

It was as if he'd taken off a pair of headphones as the previously muffled voices now hit him all at once. The first thing he noticed was Jade, sitting on the edge of the couch with him, holding his hand in both of hers. She had the smallest hands. It was adorable.

Then there was Dream, kneeling on the carpet beside the couch, holding out a tall glass of water for George to drink. They both had a look of worry in their eyes. He recognized the warmth filling Dream's clear eyes, the same look he had given him when George fell asleep on a Discord call with his face pressed into his notes. He woke up with ink printed on his cheek. But why? Why were they so worried? His tired, still waking-up brain failed to compute.

"You feeling okay?" Dream asks as George takes the glass of water from him, tilts his head back, and downs the water in one go. George blinks. He remembered walking through Dream's apartment door, and walking to his room. He couldn't remember much after that.

"Yeah... what happened?" Gradually, he eases himself up enough to sit upward with his back pressed against the arm of the couch. Jade gives his hand a small squeeze.

"I'm not really sure," Dream responds, exhaling slowly, "I think you might have been really tired? You looked really pale and then you just... fainted, I guess."

George felt sheepish with embarrassment that he made his friend deal with this. "I'm sorry," George says, lip caught between his teeth. "I know that must've been annoying."

"Don't apologize," Dream says quickly. His voice was steely, determined. George liked that about him, his determination. "I'm just glad you're okay, that's all."

There's an imposed silence upon the three of them before Jade speaks up, rubbing her thumb along the back of George's hand. "Do you need anything, George?"

George shakes his head, and in a weak attempt to show that he was fine and he didn't need anybody worrying about him, he tried to rise to his feet, yet this was a useless feat as immediately

he felt dizzy enough to be sat right back down where he started. He gave a soft, defeated sigh.

“Maybe you should stay here?” Dream proposes hesitantly. George looks over to him, about to open his mouth and say *no, it's fine* simply because he didn't want to be a bother, but Dream seemed to predict this as immediately he said, “and no, it's not a problem. I just don't want you to push it.”

Jade clears her throat a little, “I'm sure we could get you home if that's what you wanted, though.”

George looks from Jade to Dream, and their differing beliefs. Each posed solution was just as uncomfortable as the other: either he pushed through his dizziness or he stayed on this comfortable couch and waited out his headache. It's not like these were serious symptoms, but he supposed Dream was right: even if he couldn't quite *remember* what caused him to faint, he figured it was exhaustion and stress. He was known to push himself too far with studying.

“Maybe I should just sit for an hour, and then I'll feel better,” George offers. A compromise. He'd stay in Dream's apartment until he was fine where he would go home to his own apartment.

He swears he sees Jade's brow crease a little, but he figured it was merely a trick of the dim lighting.

“Sounds good,” Dream responds. As he stands, he takes the empty water glass and exits with a final supportive pat to George's shoulder. “Oh, Jade, your cupcakes-” George lifts his head enough to see over the back of the couch, where he saw Dream kneeling in front of a Tupperware container that had seemingly been dropped on the floor. Through the clear plastic, George could see enough of the smudged frosting and toppled cupcakes to see that there was a small cake massacre inside of the container. He frowns, remembering how delicately Jade had crafted those cupcakes, and how she had been so excited to try them.

“It's fine,” Jade rushes, jumping over the side of the couch to crouch down beside Dream to pick up the fallen container by herself. “I got it.” George figured he imagined the tension between them, thick in the air with such density he could feel its heat from across the room. He watched as Jade and Dream looked at each other, yet despite the clear height difference, they posed equal threat to one another.

“Well,” Jade says after a too-long length of silence, “I'll leave you guys alone.” She meets George's eyes with a small smile, “text me when you want to go back to your apartment, alright? I mean, you could come over to mine if you wanted.” George liked his apartment far more than Jade's merely because she had an overly flirtatious roommate who tried to seduce him about a hundred separate times. Well, okay, maybe he got enough of that at his own apartment as it was *Sapnap* who is George's roommate, but still.

“You don't have to go,” George offers, but Jade gives him that smile that he knew meant *no, this is how we're going to do things*. He shut up. “See you then? I'll text you.”

She kissed his forehead then, spared Dream a wave, and left the apartment with her container of ruined cupcakes.

George never did send Jade a text as he ended up falling asleep on Dream's couch, yet waking up in Dream's bed. At first, he panicked, not recognizing the bedroom as his own or Jade's, but as he ventured out of the room and into the kitchen, he found Dream asleep on the couch with Patches on his chest. A fond smile finds its way to his face.

Dream must've carried him to his bed and then slept on the couch.

George didn't know why the way Dream's eyes drifted open and his scratchy morning voice saying "*how're you feeling, George?*" made his stomach flip.

He didn't know why he didn't notice he was wearing Dream's hoodie until he was in front of his own apartment door, fumbling with his keys. He didn't like how he recognized the scent lingering in the fabric to be Dream's. He didn't understand the twisted look on Jade's face when he stepped into his apartment to find her sitting at the kitchen counter with her phone grasped in her hands. How her eyes flickered to the hoodie he wore and to the unused phone in his hand, a phone she had texted so many times for no answer.

"Sorry," George had said sheepishly, "*I didn't check my messages until just now. I fell asleep on the couch, and...*"

Jade was wearing George's hoodie, one of the ones he forgot to fold and left on his bed earlier. The sleeves hung over her hands and the gray material was loose on her small form. It was funny, really. Jade was wearing George's hoodie and George was wearing Dream's.

"*It's fine, George,*" Jade had said. "*I figured that's what happened.*"

She sounded bitter.

She had every right to be.

*It's fine.* George didn't think so.

His head hurt, but this time, it wasn't from dehydration or physical exhaustion.

It was from the mental exhaustion of constant denial.

But for now, as he hopped up to sit beside Jade on the kitchen counter, a comfortable distance between them as he took out his phone and showed her a new cupcake recipe they should try to make together, he pushed the rising feelings down.

It felt heavy and ugly.

*Resentment.*

## Chapter End Notes

This chapter was pretty short, just trying to build some tension here >:)  
also let's not villainize Jade pls, I'm trying to make her as human as possible

## Chapter 8

### Chapter Notes

"What if I'm down?  
What if I'm out?  
What if I'm someone you won't talk about?  
I'm falling again, I'm falling again, I'm falling"  
- lyrics from "Falling" by Harry Styles

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

### *Dream*

Dream made it his number one priority to stay away from George.

Before any deserved judgements can be placed, here's his (bullshit) reasoning:

1. He was becoming incredibly sick of listening to Jade's thoughts regarding George. It felt intrusive, like something private he definitely shouldn't be tuning into.
2. He was becoming incredibly sick of listening to Jade's thoughts regarding himself. The simple *why does Dream need to be here?* and *why is his name Dream, anyway?* was too much at times as within her little internal voice was a growing resentment that intensified every time the name *Dream* crossed her mind. It was exhausting, frankly.
3. Dream was wondering if he was putting a strain on George and Jade's relationship.

But Dream didn't have to read George's mind to sense the skepticism of Dream's half-assed excuses whenever George asked if Dream wanted to come over to work on their project, or play video games, or accompany Sapnap in his Harry Potter binges. He could feel the tension rising as the Discord notifications of *wanna vc?* and *are you dead or something hahaha* and then finally *Dream?* seemed to pile up. Dream would listen to the *ba-ding!* sound of the Discord notification time after time, each more spaced out than the other, the banner slipping into the abyss of notifications on his computer as he'd absently swipe it away from his game of Minecraft.

"Do you play piano or something?"

George looks up from his computer and pauses his typing. Despite his quest to stay away from George (mostly Jade, though, who was invited to most of their gatherings merely because she was *funny* and *likable* and *everyone liked her*), they did still have to finish up their music production project. Dream tried not to laugh again at the way George constantly had to wiggle his hands out of his sleeves from where they dragged over his fingertips when he typed.

"Uh," George answers, gradually looking away from the computer sat between them. "I do, actually."

Dream wished he could ask more about it, wished he could sit down and listen to George's voice for an hour, or longer, even, just talking about his own life and childhood.

"I haven't for a while, though. I took lessons as a kid. I suppose having piano skills is pretty useful in this project." George motions to the small keyboard and soundboard they had hooked up to

George's computer where the program they were using, with all the small bars of audio and noise, was piling up to look like something of a sectioned rainbow. As their project was, it was close to being finished, which was great given the fact it was due in a week. They had a somewhat interesting drum beat, a melody with a motif they stole from one of the songs they listened to as a class earlier on (they were encouraged to "steal" other artists' musical ideas, which was a relief because Dream didn't feel like coming up with his own melody), and a guitar going between G major and C major. A little uninteresting, but it was sufficient, and hopefully worthy of at least a B.

"I feel like it's missing something," George says eventually. The computer screen glowed along his face as he stared at their hard work. They currently sat at their usual picnic table under the tree in a quad area between a few restaurants. Dream always had found the tree beautiful in the way the gentle breeze made the delicate leaves rain down into his and George's hair. He noticed how George was wearing his hoodie. He also decided not to comment on it because that was pretty normal and typical to wear your friend's clothes.

Right?

"Dream?"

Dream snaps back to attention to find George waving a hand in front of his face. "Sorry," Dream says sheepishly, but George just shrugs. He was used to Dream's unwilling tendency to zone out mid-conversation, and was patient enough to not mind it.

"Do you want to go somewhere else?" George asks in curiosity. Dream opened his mouth to object, but George was already closing his computer and winding up the chords connecting the music software to his computer and stuffing it all into his backpack. "Maybe it'll help you focus better if you're not sitting in the same spot forever." Why was he so perfect?

Dream decided his quest to stay away from George could be put on pause. He'd have a cheat day.

---

Moving locations didn't yield any more work, but it did yield wonderful conversation.

George walked Dream from the center of their campus to the outskirts where the apartment complexes and freshman dorms were, and down the familiar path that Dream knew led to George and Sapnap's place. At first, Dream had dreaded this visit as he figured Jade would be sitting on the couch of the main room as she always was, and unfortunately, he was right.

"Are you just taking me to your room?" Dream inquires as George wiggles his key into the door lock, and jiggles the handle a few times before the key clicks and finally opens. The apartment had its quirks.

George scoffs, "you wish."

Dream rolls his eyes back at him. He liked to think they had a nice balance. "Shut up."

As soon as George trekked his way through the doorway and messy kitchen where Sapnap was making something (probably) edible, Dream followed suit. "Dream! My man!" Sapnap roars, doing his usual half-hug half-crush sort of thing that Dream had grown admittedly fond of. Yet, as he looked the guy in the face, he tried not to cringe at this thought processes. Let's just say that Sapnap had clearly been watching some freaky shit beforehand.

*Oh, so that's where George was.*

Dream looked over to see Jade sitting there expectantly. She had one of George's hoodies on that fell almost all the way to the hem of her floral printed skirt, her socked feet propped on the table in front of the couch and her short curly hair pulled into two small (and infuriatingly cute) pigtails. She made grabby hands to George who, with a fond little smile, made his way across the kitchen and over to Jade to lean over and probably kiss her, but Dream took this time to whirl around and raise his brows at Sapnap. "So! What are you making, Sapnap?" he says a little desperately. Anything, *anything* would do to distract Dream's thoughts from the obvious and obnoxious kissing noises coming from the living room. This was hell.

"I'm glad you asked!" Sapnap says with an enthusiasm at the same time Sapnap thinks *finally, Karl isn't here to make fun of my cooking creations and Quackity isn't here to ruin them!* "You see, most people call them pot brownies but *I* like to call them magic chocolate treats—"

Dream figured it was within his best interests not to know the true contents of the brownie like substance in the tray Sapnap was about to put in the awaiting oven as, instead, he couldn't help but listen in on Jade and George's hushed conversation.

"You're wearing Dream's hoodie?" Jade asks him quietly. Dream looks over his shoulder enough to see her pinching the material of the green fabric between her black-nailed fingers.

"Oh," George says, breaking his and Jade's gaze to look down at himself, "yeah, I guess I am."

"You'll have to let me borrow it sometime," Jade says sweetly, but what she was really thinking was *fuck! Since when do I have to compete with this tall, sexy-ass Minecraft player?! Since when are Minecraft gamers hot?!*

Dream feels his heart swell a little. Oh, so Jade was intimidated by him? He figured she only resented him because he took George time away from her— could it be that she *feared* him?

"Wanna try one?" All of a sudden, Dream was being snapped from his own daze by Sapnap holding out a severely under-baked brownie in front of him on a tissue because apparently they ran out of napkins.

"Uh," Dream says. All he has to say about this brownie is that Gordon Ramsey would crucify Sapnap for creating such a thing.

"Sapnap," George chides from where he suddenly was behind Dream, "don't poison him. No one wants to eat your shit cakes."

"It's not a shit cake!" Sapnap whines.

"I'll try your shit cake," Jade chirps, yet takes one look at the brownie and visibly grimaces.

"Yeah... never mind. I'll save those ones for Quackity and Karl."

George tugs at Dream's arm a little and over Jade and Sapnap's bickering over the "shit cakes," George murmurs, "want to go to the place I wanted to show you?"

Dream nods. "If it's just your bed, I swear, George—"

George does this little laugh where he inhaled sharply and squawk-laughed. It was... adorable. "Why do you want to get into my bed so *badly*, Dream? Kind of weirdchamp."

As they joked, George had already led Dream out of the kitchen and through the door to his bedroom. Yet, instead of stopping to sit on his bed as he usually did, George continued over to the window. Dream raises his brows at him curiously as George wedges the window open. A cool

evening breeze wafts through the room, but the true chill comes from how George turns to look at Dream with the soft moonlight lighting the side of his face.

Promptly, George jumps out the window.

Okay, maybe not *jumps*. But he surely climbs out of it quickly enough that Dream squawks out in surprise. He really had to get used to not being able to calculate people's actions based on their thoughts.

"Come on, Dream!" George said, because it turns out he was far more agile than he looked. The guy climbed out of the window and onto the roof right above his apartment, and based on the scuttling sounds against the rough roof tiles, Dream guessed there was plenty of room up there.

First, Dream looked up to where George was. Then, he looked down at the very, very, *very* far away ground.

"I'm not sure, George-"

"Here, look." And then there was the hand. George's hand, much smaller than his own and pale, but looking so perfect to hold. It was outstretched to him, offering the world, offering an escape.

Against better judgement, Dream took it. In the minute their hands collided, Dream didn't feel the shakiness to his legs he did when he got too high up for his liking. He didn't feel the dryness to his throat or the clamminess of his palms. He felt... calm. "I've got you," George says, and though his head was dangling a little to meet his eyes, Dream couldn't feel more secure. So, once their hands fit together, George's fingers wrapping tight around the sides of his hands, Dream grabbed the edge of the roof and George pulled, and after a very momentary weightlessness and his eyes screwed shut, Dream found himself laying splayed on the roof with George's hands securing him there.

As Dream's eyes fluttered open, he saw something beautiful.

George, and his wide, brown, star-filled eyes and a clear face bathed in moonlight. If Dream didn't worry so much about consequences, he'd kiss him right now. He knew exactly how he'd do it; he'd pull him closer by the collar and whisper "*is this okay?*" against his lips, and once he got his affirmation, he'd meet their lips and oh *God* he'd kiss him. He'd kiss his lips and neck and hands and jaw; he'd let George pull on his hair and he'd draw out those noises no one else could; he'd press him into these roof tiles and kiss, kiss, kiss him until they both were breathless and delirious and helpless with love.

Dream blinked back to the cold, bitter truth that reality brought to him: a platonic space that separated him to George, who sheepishly took his hands away from Dream once he realized Dream was steady and secure on the roof.

All he could think was:

*Shit, I just fantasized making out with him. A full fantasy. Holy shit.*

*And I liked it!*

*Thank God no one can hear my thoughts.*

*...Wait, fuck.*

Yeah, *fuck* alright.



Now it wasn't going to be as easy denying the truth: Dream liked George. Dream *liked* George.

"Are you alright?" George ponders with such innocence that Dream wanted to roll off the roof and die. "You look a little zoned out."

*Yeah, I just thought about kissing the shit out of you.* "I'm fine," Dream says a little strained. George looks at him quizzically. "Okay... here's something you should know." *I just realized I'm definitely, 100% not straight, and I really want to make out with you right now.* "I'm- scared of heights."

Oh.

Opening up to people was an interesting concept. It was something Dream rarely did nowadays, as he knew everything he needed to about everyone else on the face of the earth. So, what was the point of revealing facts about himself?

Well, that was until George came along and screwed up his outlooks on the world.

"Really?" George says. Then it hits him. "Oh no- I'm so sorry! Are you fine up here?"

"Yeah," Dream says honestly. He was fine because George was here. "Yeah, don't worry."

"Well, something you should know about me is... I am... colorblind."

Dream barks out a laugh, "*I know*, you idiot! How do you manage to fit that into every single conversation?"

The next hour (or longer, who knows) flew by with conversations and deliberate lack of work. Dream had been in the middle of recounting his childhood trauma with Denny's when he felt a heavy weight on his shoulder: George's head. It seemed that George could fall asleep whenever he pleased for however long he pleased, which usually was an extensive amount of time. If Dream could have a dollar for how many times George had fallen asleep during a late night Minecraft game and Discord call, he'd be incredibly rich.

It was becoming harder and harder to try and distance himself from him.

So, as Dream managed to get George conscious enough to grip onto his back, crawl back into the window (and almost drop him in the process, but that was irrelevant), Dream remembered how not long ago he had practically herded a drunk George back to his apartment.

As Dream shut the door to George's bedroom and bid Sapnap and Jade goodnight, Jade's remaining thoughts haunted him:

*They sounded like they had fun.*

---

"How's the project coming?" Wilbur asks Dream as Dream busied himself with making some instant noodles for a very nutritious midnight meal. Dream shrugs.

"Good," he answers simply, but he figured his dumbfounded smile was showing because Wilbur gave his arm a prod.

"I'm happy for you, mate." Wilbur cringes a little, "even if he has a girlfriend."

"It's not- it's not like that," Dream says with some resolve at the beginning that faded into a weak,

scared-sounding statement that Dream couldn't recognize.

"It is," Wilbur says, giving Dream's shoulder a sympathetic pat, "and that's okay." The words resonate in the atmosphere further before Wilbur eventually says, "you shouldn't avoid him, you know."

Dream pauses his stirring of the flavoring into his noodles. "Why?"

Wilbur sighs slightly as he retrieves his ice cream from the freezer and meets Dream's eyes briefly before finally saying, "because look what he's done for you."

Dream hated how right he was.

Months ago, Dream would be lacking any human interaction aside from his professors and Wilbur.

But now, George had opened the blinds and let the light into his life.

Now, Dream had about five new contacts on his phone and was never without plans. He never played Minecraft alone. He couldn't go twenty minutes without a Discord notification.

Now, Dream looked forward to his classes, and had somewhere to go each morning. Now, he had someone to lay on roofs with and talk about deep-rooted fears and rank Minecraft mobs from "would smash" to "no thanks."

George, ultimately, had become the center of Dream's universe.

And Dream couldn't let him go.

## Chapter End Notes

a round of applause for Dream who just realized the obvious

## Chapter 9

### Chapter Notes

"The great protector  
Is that what I'm supposed to be?  
What if all this counts for nothing  
Everything I thought I'd be?  
What if by the time I realize  
It's too far behind to see?"  
- lyrics from "Pluto Projector" by Rex Orange County

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

### *Dream*

It didn't take much longer for the project to be finished.

After a few more futile attempts of George trying to teach Dream different musical terms and a few more late-night hours of working on additions to their song, it was done. Turned in, completed. Dream could relax now.

Except he couldn't.

A big part of him felt empty without the project to do, because now that it was done, he didn't have that security blanket, that excuse to see George. He didn't get to dm him with the excuse to see how the project was coming along on his end. Now, Dream was alone with his true intentions, and there was no one or nothing to shield that from himself.

Dream knew that the last week was extraneous in terms of working on this project. The last bit of the song wasn't vital, and the last few meetups were pathetic, desperate attempts to hang on to what was already finished. *More time, just a little more time.* That's all that would go through Dream's head when they would work on their music together.

Dream ached to know what George was thinking when they attached the file they'd worked so hard on to their assignment and turned it in just minutes before midnight. He wished he could hear the stream of consciousness as, out of pure joy and exhaustion and relief, they sprung on each other in something of an embrace.

That single embrace felt like a splash of cold water, like a force back to reality. Dream felt like he could feel George's heart beating against his, like he could feel the tensing in his muscles slacken as the embrace went on. But it ended, because all it was was a display of affection between two *friends*.

And so, the project was finished.

Dream was all out of excuses to see George now that he had his own coffee machine and there was no more group work to collaborate on. Their music production class was coming to an end as the semester was in its final days, the days where sleep was minimal and caffeine was more of a necessity than water.

“You don’t always need an excuse to see people,” Wilbur says with unfair wisdom one evening once Dream had returned from his classes, yet hadn’t gotten around to doing anything productive. Dream nudges one side of his headphones from his ear to properly listen to his roommate’s words, though he could hear them clearly in his head:

*I wish you’d let those walls down around some people, Dream.*

Wilbur had this tendency to think words he wouldn’t say aloud, given he knew Dream was reading his thoughts anyway. It was a nice break from the rest of the world, really, as listening to unsuspecting thoughts that didn’t pertain to him grew tiresome and weird. Also, it was very amusing to hear muffled thoughts of *I wish I had a girlfriend so I didn’t have to watch nature documentaries instead* and the following *wait, can Dream hear my thoughts? DREAM! CAN YOU HEAR MY THOUGHTS?!*

And Dream would shout “Yes, you idiot!” through the walls.

It was much better than listening to Jade’s unaware jabs, or Sapnap’s questionable thought processes (well, those were fairly entertaining).

Dream sighs, because unfortunately, Wilbur had a fair point. “I’m working on it,” he settles on answering.

Wilbur nods, straightens from how he’d previously been leaning on the doorway, and takes a few steps backwards as a move to leave Dream alone once again.

Yet, before Wilbur can disappear, Dream watches a Discord notification swipe onto the right corner of his screen.

GeorgeNotFound: come on my server

DrEeEEeamMMmm

Help me speedrun

PLEASE

Omfg where are you!?!?!?

*It’s obvious, isn’t it?* Wilbur thinks as he vanishes into the kitchen, *he’s never needed excuses to talk to you.*

Dream nudges the door closed with his foot. *No, it’s not obvious*, Dream thinks to himself as, inevitably, he fails his mission to avoid George and responds to his dms by joining George’s server with a collection of clicks and mindless typing to his keyboard. *It’s not obvious because I don’t know if he wants what I do.*

---

Something that is obvious, however, is the fact that letting someone else make all the plans is far easier than making them yourself. Dream has made the wonderful discovery that if George is the one calling all the shots, there’s no way Dream could be the one to overstep a boundary and hurt him.

And lose him.

The “Sex Havers” group chat, which apparently was exclusively Karl, Quackity, and George with the clear exclusion of poor Sapnap, had been modified to “The Sex Havers... plus Sapnap and Dream” with way too many unfitting emojis. And, for the first time since its creation, it yielded something useful: proper plans. Usually, Dream would get a text from someone saying *we’re gonna be there in five minutes* and sure enough, the usual crowd would practically kick down his door with an armful of snacks and the demand to rewatch Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban. But, this wasn’t as possible as finals were upon them, which meant there was no time for such shenanigans.

Miraculously, they all agreed on meeting up on Friday night, the night before everyone flew home to spend the holiday break with their families in their respective places as each of them were flying out on various times on Saturday. They hadn’t planned exactly *what* they were doing on Friday night, but the time was set.

Dream just had to get through one more final, and then he could kick his feet up and relax for the remainder of Friday. But for now, on Thursday night, he had to do what every procrastinating college student knew how to do: cram.

That was until his phone vibrated, something he usually ignored, except the text message was from George.

So naturally, he opened it.

George: hey, wanna come over and study for comp sci?

Dream looks over at his own scrawled and hastily high-lighted notes, and figures he could use some consulting with George’s equally messy notes.

Dream: yeah, sure, omw now

Dream did his best to ignore Wilbur’s remarks of “don’t get too distracted” from behind him as he left the apartment with a backpack full of half-assed notes and some snacks as George insisted Dream had a better food supply than George and Sapnap. The path across campus took about seven minutes to walk as various apartment buildings were right across from each other and just a short path’s walk away from most classes and lecture halls. Dream particularly liked the campus at night, because it was quiet and serene, two things Dream rarely experienced due to his own incredibly irritating capabilities. Because the most loud of students were off at some frat house partying, the remaining thought processes were minimal and calm. Usually, they were just repetitions of words or numbers in the minds of studying students, or soft inner dialogues. This gave Dream the opportunity to pay attention to the way the cool breeze felt on his skin, or how the crickets chirped around him.

Unsurprisingly, George had left his apartment door unlocked for him as it opened without effort, and Dream made the usual beeline to George’s room. It was dim-lit and uncharacteristically quiet as most of the time, there was some other guest, most usually Jade or Karl or Quackity, who was in some kind of boisterous conversation with Sapnap or George. Instead, the couch was unoccupied and George’s bedroom door was shut and seemingly unwelcoming. In question, Dream frowns as he turns to Sapnap, who was in the kitchen. Even his thoughts were quiet.

Something was wrong.

Before Dream can open his mouth in question, Sapnap answers him, as if he read his mind. Dream loved it when people did that instead of the other way around for a change. “George and Jade got in a fight,” Sapnap says in a hushed voice, likely in fear that George would overhear. Dream felt sick

and overcome with a wave of differing emotions: worry, for both George and Jade as they were a usually cheerful couple. Guilt, as he wondered if it was his own fault. And lastly, some sick kind of twisted pleasure as maybe, just maybe they'd break up and Dream would have a chance with George after all.

He hated himself for that last thought.

“What for?” Dream asks as he helps himself to a soda from the fridge. He leans against the counter and turns to face Sapnap, whose dark brows were creased with clear worry. He runs a hand through his black hair and, after much meditation, finally says,

“Well... you know how George is flying home to Britain on Saturday?”

Dream nods in affirmation. He tried hard to ignore Sapnap's thoughts and focus on his voice as he wanted to hear this from Sapnap's mouth, not his mind.

“Jade wanted to come with him.”

Dream feels the cold blood prick the veins of his limbs uncomfortably. A chill overtakes him at the visage of Jade meeting George's parents and younger brother and older brother and older sister. The imagery of Jade in George's house, George's childhood bedroom— it was too intimate, too much, too *shattering*-

“George said no.”

Dream's brows raise in question. “Why did he.. say no?” He hoped his voice didn't sound too hopeful.

*Because he isn't ready for that*, is what Sapnap thinks. “I don't know,” is what Sapnap says.

Dream can't help it, he listens into Sapnap's thoughts as he pops open the soda can. *George needs more time to get some walls down. She was yelling at him, and he couldn't even yell back because he probably felt like he deserved it. They've been dating for, like, six months. Six months, or five? Or seven?*

Dream exhales. “Thanks for telling me,” he says finally, even if he wish he didn't know, because this was one more piece of information for his imagination to take and run away with.

“No worries, man.” Sapnap gives off a sigh. *He won't even talk to me about it.*

“Do you think it's okay if I go in his room?” Dream asks weakly, timid, even. “He asked if I wanted to come over and study.”

Sapnap's brows raise in surprise. *He reached out to you?* “When did he text you?”

Dream exhales in thought, “hm.. ten minutes ago? Maybe fifteen?”

*That was right after the fight.* “Oh. Yeah, I'm sure he'd be chill with it if you went in his room now.”

“Alright.” Dream straightens up, and he walks across the kitchen before pausing at the door and sparing Sapnap one more look over the shoulder. “You on for a Mario Kart tournament later?”

Sapnap's face scrunches in that grin, void of the worry that had been occupying his expression since the moment Dream stepped foot in this apartment. “Oh, you bet I'm on. Get ready to eat shit,

dude.”

Dream snickers. “We’ll see about that.”

Sapnap’s final thought before Dream gathers the courage to turn the door knob and nudge the door open with his knee is *George needs you, Dream. Take care of him, will you?*

*I will*, Dream responds in his head, *I’ll take care of him as best as I can, even if it kills me.*

It takes a moment for his eyes to adjust to the dark lighting of George’s room, the only source of light being the meager lamp beside his bed and his still-running PC. As Dream shut the door behind him, he blinked through the darkness to see that George was on his bed, lying on his side. His phone was powered off and lay unused beside him, even as it vibrated with incoming messages.

“George?”

It seemed that Dream’s voice snapped George from his trance as, suddenly, George sat up and looked over to Dream in question. He looked tired, emotionally. His hair was matted to the side from his pillow, and he had that blanket he only used when he intended to go to sleep.

So why wasn’t he sleeping?

Why did he ask Dream to come over?

*George needs you, Dream.* Sapnap’s inner voice haunts Dream’s mind. He gulps.

Going against better judgement, Dream sets his backpack beside his shoes on the floor and sits on George’s bed beside him. It gives a weak creak as the bed was likely only intended for one person, not for two fully grown college guys. Dream uses the small size of the bed as an excuse to sit closer.

“Hey,” Dream says weakly.

“Hey,” George replies. There’s a silence, but it isn’t uncomfortable.

“I’m guessing Sapnap told you about what happened,” George says eventually with a heaved sigh.

“Yeah...”

More silence.

“It’s not a big deal,” George feels the need to say. Dream just shakes his head and scoots a tiny bit closer, closer enough to steal a bit of George’s blanket and cover his own legs, too.

“It is,” Dream says. “And that’s okay.”

George sighs again. “I just... I don’t know.” He sounded like he wanted to go somewhere with that, but hit some kind of emotional wall instead of finishing the thought.

“Have you ever had a girlfriend?” George asks eventually.

“I have,” Dream answers.

“Did you ever fight?”

“We did. I think we were just sick of each other, but too scared to let go.” Now it’s Dream’s turn to sigh. “We burned out before we really got started, you know?” It seemed Dream was having opposite problems with his ex-girlfriend and George: one was over before it began, and one would never have the chance to begin in the first place. One was full of expectation, and the other of longing.

“Maybe Jade and I have a similar problem,” George admits. He sounded uncertain, like he wasn’t sure if he wanted to continue on this path of vulnerability. “Maybe... she wants more from me than I want from her.”

“Then ask her to wait up for you,” Dream answers before he can stop himself. George shifts from beside him.

“What do you mean?” George asks, somewhat timid.

“I mean, ask her to wait.” Dream looks up at the ceiling because he can’t believe himself in this moment, “I wish someone told me that three years ago.”

Somehow, Dream’s gaze shifted, and he was meeting George’s warm, kind eyes. A pair of eyes that belonged to the most deserving person in the world: he deserved someone who would wait up for him without question.

But George nods.

Maybe George’s future didn’t have to be like Dream’s.

Maybe Dream would have to watch from the sidelines.

But that was okay.

As long as George was happy.

Dream would take care of George as best as he could, even if it killed him.

---

Dream would have failed that final if it wasn’t for his mind reading capabilities as he didn’t spend a minute more of studying after arriving at George’s apartment. Instead, he spent his time comforting George in the form of distraction, which was video games, obviously. Sapnap gladly accepted their challenge to a Mario Kart tournament, which went so late into the night that it became morning. Despite Dream’s (and Sapnap’s) underlying worry for George, he noticed that once the night went on, George became less occupied with checking his phone each time it vibrated.

While Dream did wake up with Sapnap’s socked foot in his face and the sight of George drooling on his leg (wonderful blackmail material), he felt a warm fuzzy feeling in his chest that he couldn’t quite define.

George had done a lot for him. Instead of waking up in his own cold, one-man bed, Dream had the pleasure of waking up on a piece-of-shit couch in a tangle of limbs that didn’t belong to him. He couldn’t ask for more.

However, after George and Dream walked from their comp sci class, both with hands sore and graphite-smudged from filling in the bubbles of a scan-tron sheet, Jade awaited them on her usual bench. Dream pledged to himself that this time, he wouldn’t run away from his problems and



decline the usual offer to have lunch with Jade and George. This time, he would face his fears because he truly believed that a little pain would pay off instead of shoving George entirely out of his life. What a logical conclusion! Wilbur would be so proud.

But of course, as any story goes, as soon as the protagonist makes a logical conclusion, it all goes to shit.

(Consider this foreshadowing.)

As Jade arose from her usual bench, satchel clutched in one hand and other hand flattening out her dress (even though it was the middle of winter... the poor girl was probably freezing), Dream felt a sudden pang to the stomach. Not of illness.

Of dread.

Dream hadn't felt such an overwhelming wave of dread since he was ten years old, where, via his telepathy, he discovered his father had been cheating on his mom with his mom's best friend. He remembered the irritatingly fond tone of voice his father took as he said *you understand, don't you, Clay?* because no, he didn't understand.

Dream liked to think he was good at masking his emotions, but in this moment, the facade crumbled as he had to raise a hand to clutch at his upset stomach and even more tremulous mind.

"Dream- are you okay?" He could feel George's gentle hand on his elbow, and George's eyes searching for his.

But Dream was looking at Jade.

It was disturbing how her mind was a swirling storm of self-deprecation and dripping guilt when on the outside, she smiled sweetly without any sense of malicious intent.

Dream could sense the tidal waves of culpability, he could *feel* the fear and self-loathing from where he stood feet away from her.

He didn't have to thoroughly sift through Jade's thoughts to come to a conclusion. He didn't need, or want, to analyze the flash-backs, the heat, the suffocating lust and rushed longing. He didn't *need* to see any more of the memories of clinging to strangers and the pang of guilt later on to know what had happened.

Jade had cheated on George.

And George had *no* idea.

## Chapter End Notes

I feel like I can already see the comments for this one

# Chapter 10

## Chapter Notes

"I make enough mistakes  
And it feels like she's the only one that hears the things I say  
So if for any reason there's some miscommunication or I'm lying to her face  
My immaturity and habits getting in the way  
Cause I can barely breathe and I don't know how I'll explain myself this time"  
- lyrics from "Untitled" by Rex Orange County

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

### *Dream*

Long story short, Dream did not go to lunch with Jade and George.

Partly because Jade's mind was an implosive wreck that Dream would be overwhelmed to listen to and attempt to be functional in conversation.

Partly because she *cheated* on George.

What was he supposed to say? "*I know you cheated on your boyfriend I happen to kind of have feelings for because I can read minds*"?

From the moment Dream felt the dread hit him with sickening heaviness, he had to excuse himself from the two. "I'm really tired from finals," he assures George, who clearly wasn't buying it, "I think I'll just rest up before we hang out later, okay?"

"Alright," George concedes, his eyes searching Dream's for hints of uncertainty. Dream was sure he detected it, yet George's smile hardly wavered as he gave Dream a small wave and turned around to entwine hands with Jade.

Now, some might point the finger at Dream for being stupid for not telling George right then. Some might call him morally wrong for not telling Jade to get her hands away from him, hands that had been entwined in someone else's just hours ago while George had fretted over the stability of their relationship.

Maybe Dream was wrong, but he followed strict principles:

He wouldn't use his powers to interfere with people's lives.

He wouldn't rupture the delicate balance of human nature.

Despite this, he was overwhelmed with responsibility as hearing Jade's thought was the worst kind of torture. It ranged from *I'm a terrible person* to *I bet George cheated on me* to in attempts to validate her actions. Eventually, her mind meandered to thoughts of *I'll be better this time, I won't do it again* and *he probably doesn't care anyways*.

Dream realized something as he got away from Jade as quickly as possible without breaking into a full sprint:

She was a true stranger to George if she didn't know how his heart would shatter once he discovered this.

---

When Dream's dad cheated on his mom, he told his mom immediately after.

He ignored his father's pleas to just *keep this our little secret* to the point where Dream was offered mind-boggling bribes.

But that made him more angry.

Even at age ten, Dream would not be swayed by bribery. He had said, "*you think a heartbreak is worth one hundred dollars?*"

Telling his mom didn't feel as relieving as he thought it would.

She didn't get mad at him simply because he was just a kid, but her thoughts wanted her to.

*Why would Clay make up something like this?  
He wouldn't. He hates attention.*

*Maybe he wants attention.*

*No, he can probably hear my thoughts right now.*

*I'm sorry, Clay.*

*He wouldn't.*

*Your dad wouldn't.*

*You don't know him like I do.*

Dream watched as his mother, with eyes full of unspilled tears, shook her head and, through a shaky smile, said "*there must have been some kind of misunderstanding.*"

They never divorced, but they never loved each other again.

Dream wondered if he made the right decision. Should he have let her discover this on her own? Should he never have said anything at all?

Should he have taken the hundred dollars and kept his mouth shut?

"Dream, look at me," Wilbur says, forcing Dream to look up from where he was looping a belt through his jeans. Naturally, as he'd come back to the apartment pale and out of sorts, Wilbur asked about what in the *hell* went wrong with the day. Dream told him just because the voices in his head, the voices that didn't belong to him, were on that delicate brink of *too much* to the point where it was overwhelming.

Dream was currently getting ready for a frat party The Sex Havers (...and Sapnap and Dream) group chat decided to attend as their last hurrah before they went their separate ways for a few weeks. Dream hated, *hated* parties because of all the noise and the thick, gross smell of cheap beer, but he refused to miss out on any more than he already had. Sure, he'd endure a little hell to get some more time in with his friends.

Unfortunately, he didn't have Wilbur to help him out as he was flying out to Britain on Friday evening.

As Dream meets Wilbur's eyes, he sighs. "You have to tell him."

Dream shakes his head as he turns his back to Wilbur to straighten his green varsity jacket. It was something of an upgrade from his usual plain hoodie. "I can't, Wilbur. You know that."

"I- I really don't give a shit about your little principles, alright? Listen, Dream. You're going to tear yourself apart with regret if Jade ends up *marrying* him because you were too late to tell George about what happened."

Dream freezes. "It's college, Wilbur. No way they're going to get married."

Wilbur meets his eyes through the mirror, "but if you don't tell him tonight, you'll put it off for after break, then after that, and eventually, you'll never say a word and try to convince yourself that you're doing the right thing. That you shouldn't *interfere*. Tell me, Dream. How's it going to feel when George's heart gets broken?"

Dream's throat feels dry.

He pushes the rising feelings of self-resentment down.

He checks his leather-band watch and gives off a sigh.

"I have to get going," he says. Wilbur gives him a knowing look.

"Look, I'll... I'll try to tell him, okay?"

Wilbur gives off a sigh and pats Dream's shoulder somewhat sympathetically.

"Just try. That's all you can do, mate."

---

Coming to a party was a terrible idea.

Dream already felt like his sensory overload was spilling over the edge, so this wasn't helpful at all.

This party gave him flashbacks to the one he went to not long ago, except there was no drunk George to carry home and no Wilbur to offer to walk him back to the apartment. It was just Dream and all the weight he carried on his shoulders, and the rest of the people crammed into this already defaced house.

Dream tried to separate the noises of people flipping over couches and laughing loudly to Karl's voice, who was trying to tell a supposedly interesting story about the time Quackity got stuck in a tree.

"Like a cat," Sapnap snickers.

"Call me a cat one more time," Quackity says, yet it was incredibly hard to take him seriously when he was practically swaying with intoxication.

"You're the one who's obsessed with meowing at people," Karl retorts with an innocent shrug.

"You can meow at me in the bedr-" Dream was thankful for Quackity's action to muffle his hands

over Sappnap's mouth before he could finish that sentence. Although, Dream was graced with the *wonderful* ability to see the visuals filling Sappnap's mind at that moment.

Yikes.

Despite these playful and entertaining interactions, Dream could only catch them for seconds at a time before someone's loud, drunk thoughts washed over him, or someone decided to turn up the music, or when a random person would bump into him on accident. It was too much. There was no *brink* on too much anymore- it was just *too much*.

"Hey, Dream!" George says cheerfully, shouting over the music. He had a red solo cup in his hand, which explained the slight flamboyancy to his tone.

"Hey," Dream replies. He tries not to meet the eyes of Jade, who had her arm looped around George's.

He felt an overwhelming amount of loathing come upon him as he finally did meet Jade's eyes. She smiled brightly, eyeliner perfect and hair styled to perfection. She had on a pantsuit tonight. Why was it that she looked like she would any other night? Somehow, the fact she appeared entirely normal made this all so much worse.

*He doesn't need to know*, was what Jade was thinking. *This guy was better in bed anyway.*

Dream didn't care that the rest of Jade's thoughts were horrified by that, the following stream of consciousness being *why did I just think that?* and *I'm a horrible person I'm a horrible person I'm a horrible person.*

Dream didn't *care* that she, maybe, wasn't an entirely horrible person.

*Too much* had been pushed to *too far*.

"Excuse me," Dream says, giving George's shoulder a pat as he walks past, "I'm just gonna go over to the bathroom for a minute."

Dream didn't wait for George's reply, didn't wait to hear Jade's thoughts or Karl's anecdotes because he was already drowning in this sea of flaws.

Dream felt like he could throw up at all the noise, because even as he waded between sweaty, intoxicated college students getting way too close and too sexual for a public setting, the nausea didn't fade. Even as he shut the door to the bathroom and splashed his face with cold water, he could still hear *everything*.

He felt like a stranger to himself. He felt like he didn't belong here.

Back in Florida, Dream loved going to the beach as a boy. Even back then, he was stubborn and rash, and searching for thrill.

He would say *watch this!* to his sister and go bounding into the tremulous ocean water. His family would joke about how often this would occur.

Then, he would wait for a big wave, and instead of taking the safe route of diving under the five-meter wall of water, he'd take his chances and jump over it.

Of course, his short, weak, eight year old body wouldn't get over the break in time, and as the wave crashed, he would too.

Being forced underwater was amongst one of the most terrifying feelings in the world. When he was a kid, he used to cry every time he got trampled in a wave, and his mom would have to go in the ocean, scoop him up, and bring him back to the safety of the sand.

But he'd never forget what that felt like, completely losing control as the thick folds of water swayed him upside down and back and forth, slamming his back against the sand of the ocean floor and flinging him back up until he was choking up water at the surface and gasping for air.

That's what this felt like.

He felt like he was being forcefully shoved further and further underwater by all the weight he had to carry, all the voices he had to listen to, all the noises he had to filter out.

Dream was too wedged in his own toxic mind to hear the door of the bathroom open and close, too lost to feel himself pressing his hands tightly over his ears in a futile attempt to find some silence.

He didn't notice the presence with him until he felt hands on his knees from where he had curled himself up in the bathtub. He didn't even remember crawling into here and balling up like this. At first, Dream panicked at the sudden touch that felt red-hot to him in this state, but as soon as his eyes opened and he saw George there, eyes wide and kind, he relaxed some.

He let George guide his hands away from his ears, and even as the exterior sounds got louder, Dream was okay with it so long as George was here.

"What's going on?" George asks quietly. Wordlessly, George slips in the bathtub next to him, far enough away that they weren't touching. Dream hated it when people touched him when he was in the middle of episodes like this.

"It's just... loud," Dream murmurs. He hated how weak he sounded, and didn't want to explain. He couldn't hear his own thoughts anymore.

"Yeah?" George responds. He appreciates the lack of prying questions. "Let's get out of here, then."

Dream's eyes widen, "but--"

"Sapnap and Quackity got themselves into a Just Dance competition in the living room," George interjects, "and Jade is in a beer pong tournament with Karl, so I think they'll all be fine. They won't notice if we disappear for a bit."

Dream wants to tell George all the reasons why he doesn't deserve him, he wants to tell George what he *needs* to.

But he can't.

The words won't even come to his mouth as he watches George scramble a little as he got himself out of the bathtub, and with a somewhat tired but still bright grin, he offered a hand out to Dream.

It reminded him of that night on the roof, just the previous night, where Dream had been scared to go up on the roof, but all it took was an offered hand and a dazzling smile to get him to conquer his fear.

He couldn't help but feel similarly now; except this fear was much more ugly, and much more difficult to conquer.

Dream takes George's hand anyway, even if he didn't accept the terms that came with that action.

---

Dream has always found that driving is something that takes his mind off of the world that never seemed to leave him alone.

The act of sitting behind the steering wheel and having the power to just *leave* was securing to Dream. So, once he was buckled into the driver's seat and George was in the passenger's side switching through radio stations, he took off into the night. Nothing felt more satisfying than watching that people-filled house shrink further and further away in his rearview mirror, and the thoughts along with it. Maybe he was wrong to think this, but just for now, Dream would leave his mundane worries back at that house. For now, it was him and George against the world. No more, no less.

"So, where are we going?" George asked about fifteen minutes into the drive. Dream shrugs.

"You'll see."

George laughs easier than he normally does, more freely. Maybe he was a little tipsy. Cute. "Are you kidnapping me?"

"Isn't that obvious?" Dream replies, flicking his hand over his turning signal and watching as the light from his blinker cast a small glow on the otherwise dark road. The moon was practically invisibly small and the stars were bright now that they were away from the light pollution. Dream ignored George's whines and protests that Dream wasn't telling him where they were going as he pulled into a parking lot, empty given what hour it was. He probably wasn't allowed to park at this time, but he doubted anyone was awake to ticket him.

"Dream!" George wails, comically whiny, "what are you- DrEeeEam!"

Dream can't help but wheeze-laugh at how worked up George was becoming at the lack of answers as Dream opens and closes his car door and goes around to the back of his car to fish out some towels he kept in the trunk. Florida habits.

"Stop your complaining and follow me," Dream directs, watching as George hopped out from the passenger's side as he tossed him a towel that George fumbled to catch.

George pursed his lips stubbornly, yet once Dream starts striding away from the parking lot and into the darkness, he hears him cry "wait for me!" from behind.

After more idle conversation and walking along a dirt path meandering further and further away from the main road (where Dream could only hear his own thoughts, it was beautiful), they finally arrived to their destination. Contrary to George's accusations that Dream was merely making them wander aimlessly, before them was a wide, dazzling lagoon that looked like a dark pool of stars.

"Wow," George marvels. Dream gives a contented sigh and sticks his hands in his back pockets to admire the pool of water, sheltered in a crater of tree-framed land. There wasn't a single wave other than the small ones that lapped over the skinny shore; the delicate surface only rippled with the cool, occasional breeze. Despite it being far too cold for a midnight swim, Dream wanted nothing more than to jump into that water and feel the cold water slip over his skin.

Mutely, Dream slipped his varsity jacket off and tossed it next to his phone and towel, then pulled off the hoodie he had beneath, and finishing with his shoes, socks, and jeans. Respectively, he looked away as George did the same.

Once they both were ready, they silently waded into the water. Upon contact, Dream shuddered visibly as it was very quite cold, but not bad, so he continued on. George, on the other hand, stopped wading in and shook his head.

“It’s so cold,” George complains. Dream furrows his brows at him.

“Quit being such a baby,” Dream replies, folding his arms in imitation and scrunching his nose at him, “waaah waaaah, my name is George and I’m British and I’m such a *baby*-”

George scoffed and kicked up water at him. “Oh shut *up*-”

Dream looked at him in momentary shock at the wall of water George had kicked over to him, enough water that it splashed up on his hair and dripped down his mostly dry back. His previously uncomfortable expression faded to a playful one. “It’s on now, Georgie,” Dream challenges. George’s eyes widen, but his fate was sealed.

“No, no, wait-! Dream- DREAM!”

Dream cackled psychotically as he lunged for George, who shrieked so loudly it reverberated off of the water and echoed. But Dream caught him, wrapped his arms tight around his middle, and promptly swung him over his shoulder. He could feel George’s stomach jumping with breathless laughter, and could feel his hands playfully hitting his back as he begged for mercy to be set down.

“Put me down!” George complains, “Dream! I swear, I’m going to-”

Consequently, Dream threw George into the water. He almost felt guilty when he watched him surface, brown hair flattened and wet over his eyes, mouth spitting up water and limbs wrapping around themselves. After he shook the wet hair from his eyes, he looked at Dream with a look of pure loathing. He looked like a cat that had been tricked into a bath.

“Going to what?” Dream asks sweetly.

George’s lunging at him actually was quick enough to take him off guard, so in the end, George did end up tackling him into the water, which he definitely deserved.

They didn’t stay in the lagoon much longer as it was very dark and cold and they were both tired and freezing, so once they splashed at each other to their heart’s content, they waded from the water and wrapped themselves up in towels. As unpleasant it was to put socks on sandy feet and jeans on wet legs, it all was worth it. George did end up scoring Dream’s varsity football jacket from high school, however, simply because it was Dream who forced George into the water in the first place.

“I’ll give it back when we’re at my apartment,” George insists, cupping his hand over his mouth as he yawned. He leaned his head against the car window, and they both gave a tired laugh because George said the same thing about the last two hoodies Dream lent him that still were miraculously missing.

(George didn’t give the jacket back once Dream walked him up to his apartment, but George did give Dream a half-asleep smile. “That was a lot of fun,” George had said, giving a friendly wave. “Text me if you need anything, alright?”

Dream smiled and told him to do the same.

But he didn’t know what he needed.)



---

Dream was determined not to be a dumbass.

He woke up in the morning, pulled on a shirt to go with his sweats, practically chugged his mug of coffee, and wrestled his feet into untied hightop shoes.

He was determined to do the right thing, which was to tell George the truth. The whole truth. The information would eat him alive inside-out if he didn't get it out at least before George went across the Atlantic in complete oblivion that his girlfriend didn't love him as much as he thought she did. Actually, Dream was certain Jade didn't love him at *all*.

But Dream managed to get out the door of his apartment and make the familiar commute to George's place just in time before he took off to go to the apartment. George should be leaving the apartment in fifteen minutes. Dream would have plenty of time, if he ran. So he did. Half-asleep and overall deprived, Dream ran and practically bumped into the few remaining kids on campus.

So, once Dream used his key to unlock George and Sapnap's front door to burst in and beeline to George's room, he opened the door to find-

No one.

Absolutely no one.

George's bed was made, which was rare, and the closet doors were ajar to reveal the contents empty. The blinds were open for the early morning sunlight to stream in, his PC was powered off as it would be for weeks.

Dream missed it. George must have left early.

Dream groans and pushes his hands against his closed lids, giving off a frustrated groan. Wilbur was right. He was going to put this off time after time until time ran out, and George was out of his life.

Dream's eyes fall on George's desk, the chair pushed in instead of strewn across the room somewhere. But remaining on the desk, aside a small collection of notebooks and pens, was a picture. Jade had a polaroid that she liked to take with her when she went on adventures with the friend group. They had a lot of fun with it, taking funny pictures of each other when they least expected it. They made a game out of it.

Unsurprisingly, at the top of the stack was a polaroid of George and Jade. The heart twists in Dream's heart as he sees how brightly George was smiling as he held the camera out in front of them, and the candid, true smile Jade held as she looked at his face.

What happened to that candid smile?

But, below the picture, Dream swore he could another. Thoughtlessly, he swiped his hand up to summon the picture from the desk to his hand, watching as it fluttered until his fingers grasped it.

It was a picture of Dream and George. One that either Wilbur or Karl took, where they had found an abandoned (and probably dangerous) playground down the street from campus. Dream and George were sitting on either sides of a cramped tire swing, legs through over each other's laps, mouths stretched open with true laughter.

It was a great picture.

Dream heard a loud gasp from behind him.

“You- did you just-”

He whirls around. Seriously? This again?

Similarly to the previous incident, Dream found George gaping at him, brows raised and jaw dropped in utter disbelief.

“Wait, George-”

George opened his mouth, likely to scream, but in an instant, Dream lunged for him and clamped a hand hard over his mouth to muffle the commotion. “Come *on* now, listen to me, would you?”

Of course Sapnap had to walk in right then, with Dream’s hand muffled over George’s mouth, where George’s back was leaned against his bed. George’s hands were firm on either of Dream’s shoulder’s. They both looked like a deer caught in headlights as Sapnap sheepishly cleared his throat.

“Sorry, didn’t mean to interrupt... whatever this is,” Sapnap says slowly, biting his lip as he looked between the two of them for an explanation he’d never receive. “What are you..?”

“Could we have a moment?” Dream asks, not unkindly. Sapnap raises his brows, and Dream hates the thought that follows: *kinda hot*.

“Sure, sure. Let me know when you’re... done in here.”

Dream wants to die, but once the door clicks shut, he lets go of his hand from George’s mouth. “Sorry about that,” he says, but George was not one to be calm right now.

“What the fuck?! Are you an alien? Are you here to *kill* me?”

“No, George- could you just let me-”

“So I *didn’t* hallucinate it when I fainted that one time? Holy-”

“George!” Finally, George shut up. Dream sighs. “Look, I can read people’s minds, okay?”

George looks at him with a silence before he bursts into some of the loudest laughter Dream has heard from him. Despite the circumstance, he can’t help but soften at the sound of it.

“You can- oh my *God*- tell me Dream, how did you pull that trick? How did you *do* it? Are you hacking or something?”

“I’m being serious!”

“Oh yeah? What am I thinking right *now*?” George challenges, laughter fading and arms folding. Dream gives a tired sigh.

“That’s the thing. You’re the one person I’ve encountered that I can’t read the mind of. Like... remember when I first went in that coffee shop? And I was kind of disoriented?” Dream remembers their first encounter, how stupid and stammering he had been. George nods slowly, but skeptically. “It was because I couldn’t hear a single thought in your head. It was really off-putting.”

“Still not convinced,” George says.

"I can read Sapnap's mind, though," Dream says. "Which is more of a curse than a blessing."

George's brows raise. "Oh really? What's he thinking right now?"

Dream scrunches his nose, "you don't wanna know."

"No, tell me. Tell me something about Sapnap that proves you can read his mind."

Dream thinks for a moment, "Sapnap had this girlfriend, Drew, in high school. They dated for like... three months, and he tells everyone he broke up with her, but really, she broke up with him. Also, you know how one of your hoodies went missing the other week? Well, Jade actually borrowed it, spilled bright red juice on it, and felt so guilty she tried to wash it out, but that actually made it worse so she ended up just throwing it away."

"You can hear people's thoughts- *all* the time?" George questions, brows raising further and further.

"Yes," Dream answers tediously, "but please don't faint this time."

George scowls at him. "I won't! I was just... tired."

"Mmhm, sure."

There's a silence as, with his telekinesis, he levitates the polaroid picture from his hand up into the air, and so on. George's eyes followed the action in wonder and curiosity. There was something liberating about getting to use his powers openly in front of someone.

"So... you don't think I'm crazy?" Dream asks eventually. George shrugs.

"Who knows, honestly, but that doesn't mean I don't have a billion questions. Or think you're some kind of freak alien whose mission is to come here and kill me."

"Don't be ridiculous, George," Dream says with a short laugh, "it wouldn't be such a hard task to kill you."

George looked utterly terrified.

"I'm kidding!"

"Okay, well, I actually have to go," George says, pointing down at his phone. Dream sucks in his breath. It seems he'd gotten George off track.

Despite the events that just occurred, they acted surprisingly normal as Dream helped George lug his suitcase out to the living room, and Sapnap went down to get the car ready to drive George to the airport.

"See you in a few weeks," Dream says as farewell. George reciprocates his wave before he says,

"Wait, why did you come here in the first place?"

Dream feels the cold blood rush to his heart.

He watches as George looks at him, brows raised, one foot already out the door to go home to his family. He watches as George, with his wide, kind brown eyes looked into his, unsuspecting of what was to come.

Dream sighed.

“Just wanted to say goodbye.”

He hated himself for it, but George huffed a laugh.

“Don’t miss me too much,” is all George says before he disappears behind the corner.

## Chapter End Notes

me: \*makes jade nice\*

also me: \*makes her cheat on George\*

no,, more,,, fortnite!

# Chapter 11

## Chapter Notes

"If you feel lonely  
I could be lonely with you  
Tell me baby  
Why do you seem so blue?"  
- lyrics from "sports" by beach bunny

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

### ***Dream***

*"You're so tense," George says, brow furrowing as he looked over to Dream, "why are you always so tense?"*

*That felt like more of a personal attack than advice. Dream shrugs. "I dunno. I didn't know you had to be so relaxed to play the piano."*

*George gives him a laugh in return, bumping Dream's knee with his own from where they sat on the piano bench. It was a breezy autumn afternoon after their morning class of computer science, empty coffee cups on the table beside the piano as, when Dream was about to set his cup on the piano, George chastised him by nearly smacking him across the head.*

*See, George was trying to teach Dream the basics of piano so he could have a better grasp of what was going on in their music production class. Despite the multiple times Dream insisted that George didn't have to teach him anything, George was determined, and once George had his mind set, there was no deterring him.*

*"Remember what I said about dominant-seven chords?" George says. Dream nods. "I think it would be helpful if you had a visual of it, right?"*

*"Sure," Dream says with little confidence. George laughs again.*

*"Here, I'll show you. This is a triad-" His wrist lightly lifts before delicately, yet precisely, his hand curls onto the blank keys of the piano and land with a soft, hallow, just-right sound. Dream observed how his fingers were separated by one note each. "This is a seventh chord-" He watched as George's pinkie finger stretched out to follow the pattern of being one note apart, or as George had called it so many times, one "whole step" apart. "And this is a dominant seventh chord-" Okay, now he was a little lost.*

*"Does that make sense?" George turns his head to meet Dream's eyes, hand still placed onto the piano and the notes still ringing in the air. Dream smiles sheepishly.*

*"Uhhh, yeah," he says with comical uncertainty. George laughs, but he smiles patiently at him.*

*"How about you try playing a regular seventh chord?"*

*The sound that came from the chord Dream played was nowhere near as elegant as what George played. It was clunky, and his finger slipped onto one of the black keys before he replaced it in its*

*correct place, and he cringed a little at how rough the notes sounded. “Almost,” George says, and Dream nearly dies because George reached his hand across the keys to where Dream was focusing on his hand, and had the damn audacity to pick up Dream’s hand in both of his own and place each of his fingers where they were supposed to go.*

*There was a moment where George could have let go, but he didn’t.*

*It was nothing, really, nothing more than a brush of contact that was enough to send little butterflies fluttering about Dream’s heart, but it was enough that when George pulled his hand away abruptly, Dream’s fingers felt cold without George’s.*

*George’s eyes bore into his for just a second, and Dream smiled a little at him. George smiled back.*

*For someone who hated being able to read people’s minds, Dream couldn’t begin to know what was going on in George’s head.*

---

The weeks of winter break went by with such sluggishness that Dream was sure that minutes were crawling by as slow as hours.

Usually, winter break was a time that Dream counted down to. He’d always loved Christmas time because it was a time to be with his siblings, a time to worry about nothing but eating as many snowflake-decorated cookies as humanly possible. Even if he was labored with the task of listening to the rather toilsome thoughts of his parents and the marriage struggles he didn’t need to know about, usually those thoughts were drowned out in a buttload of Christmas spirit.

This year was different.

His parents seemed even more resentful of each other to the point where it was visible from the outside. His aunt’s family couldn’t come down for Christmas as they usually did, which meant there were no baby cousins to fill the house, no aunt and uncle to drink all the wine in the proximity of the house.

But the worst part was that Dream had the crushing weight of morality weighing down on him.

He was on Discord calls with George more often than not, calls being ongoing on the group chat they had with Karl, Quackity, and Sapnap. If either of them felt fatigued by the constant chatter of the others on the call, they’d excuse themselves to a separate vc to just relax for a bit. Even if they both were quiet and scrolling through their phones, it was comforting to know that if Dream said something, someone would be there to listen to him.

Dream would be lying if he said every time George looked at his camera with a bright smile, he didn’t feel something heavy in his heart sink a little further. But there was something so precious, so invaluable about George’s candid smile that made it impossible to break it. Dream wished he could tell George the true cost of his abilities, just knowing that the very person George spoke so highly and fondly of wasn’t treating him right at all.

Of course, George had many, many questions about Dream’s abilities. In fact, Dream’s phone blew up the instant George got off his international flight stepped into his home all the way in Britain. The questions ranged from *do you cheat on tests?* to *what do people’s thoughts sound like?*

Dream laughed but answered every one of George’s questions merely because there was something comforting about being asked a million questions that he knew the answers to. After a few days of

avid question-asking, George resolved and decided that he believed Dream's freakish abilities.

"So, it really doesn't bother you?" Dream had asked one night with more insecurity than he would have liked. Through the graininess of George's camera, he sees a small, slightly confused smile.

"Why would it bother me, Dream?" George answers, brow raising slightly.

Dream loved how clueless he was in this situation.

They went back to their game of Minecraft without question until Dream's little sister finally shouted at him enough times to convince him to get out of his cave-like room to watch some movies with her.

---

After weeks of what felt like moral torture, winter break was finally drawing to a close. Dream's older brother had to go back to the real world and the suitcase that had remained unused in his closet was beginning to fill up with the belongings he had brought back with him. His sister became less disagreeable as clearly she dreaded his leaving, and something about that made his heart ache to leave her behind.

Above anyone else, Dream hated having to read his sister's thoughts just because she was so close to him, and such an overwhelmingly good person that he couldn't stand it. Most of the sensory overload he got nowadays was because of the mere frustration he had with himself that he could hear the internal dialogues of his unsuspecting little sister. Despite her assurances that it was *fine* that he could hear her thoughts, Dream still couldn't stand it.

But he had one more night before he boarded a plane that would take him back to his other life at college, the life where George was very much real and not just a face on his computer screen, a voice in his headphones.

In all honesty, Dream didn't know if he was ready to face him after this break where he wouldn't go hardly an hour without hearing George's voice through his earbuds or headphones, or a text from him awaiting to be opened on his phone screen.

Regardless, it was three in the morning in Florida and seven in the morning for Britain. Despite Dream's constant chastising, George would drink Monster Energy after Monster Energy to stay awake.

As of right now, George was screen-sharing from where he was playing Outlast simply because he had lost a dumb bet to Karl. George *hated* horror games which made this all the more entertaining.

"Okay, I just have to hide in this- AAHH! WHAT! DREAM?! DID YOU SEE THAT?! HE SHOULDN'T HAVE- WHAT!!!"

Dream, frankly, was dying of laughter far too much to see what had happened to George's character on the screen. In fact, he was laughing so hard his voice had moved on from normal laughing to painful wheezing, practically hyperventilating into his mic.

"Dream, this isn't funny! STOPPIT!"

Dream just laughed harder and harder at how George's voice would cut off from screaming so loud and so close to his microphone to the point where when he tried to get any words out, they'd be lost in his own folds of unforgiving laughter until eventually, George had to laugh with him.

Dream wheezed and choked himself back to life to watch George play for another ten minutes without any outbursts, simply roaming along the map of the game until, inevitably, there was another jump scare where George screamed so loud Dream's ears were ringing for minutes after, and Dream heard such a distinct clatter from George's end that he figured meant he fell out of his chair.

As George's character settled down and went about wandering the non-jump-scare-infested hallways of the map, the two settled into more normal conversation, about the boring outputs of life over winter break. George would arrive a few hours after Dream, and even if they were so close to seeing each other again, Dream *ached* to be next to him. The real George. He felt pathetic, really, because it had only been weeks but it felt like a lifetime that he'd been away from George.

He'd spent his life away from him. He didn't feel like wasting anymore time.

(Which is ironic because he's wasted all of this time fretting over George this, George that. He'd wasted time lying to him, and he wasn't sure if he could stop.)

"Are you ready to go back?" George said. Even if he was only talking about his character going back to the more dangerous sections of the video game, Dream felt like his words were implying more.

"I think so," Dream says. He meant it this time.

---

He wasn't ready, he realized, as a sleep-deprived George slipped into the passenger's side of his car.

"Hey, you," Dream drawls as he turns to look to George, who was busy throwing his backpack into Dream's back seat before sitting forward and offering the other a weary smile. He could tell from the slack nature to George's face that he was tired.

"Hey," George replies as he stretches out his legs and arms with a small groan. "Oh, man, I hate planes."

Dream gives a laugh as he rolls the car into drive and pulls away from the curb of the bustling airport before the parking attendant yelled at him for taking too long in the drop-off-only zone. "Me too," Dream offers. George hums,

"Oh, yeah, I'm sure you do."

Dream remembers that night on the roof where George helped him conquer his fear of heights just by the brush of his hand.

By George's smile, Dream thinks he remembers it too.

It's mostly quiet for the rest of the ride as George falls asleep in the middle of telling Dream a story about how his baby cousin almost burned the house down, and despite how boring the quietness enveloping the car was, Dream was grateful George could get some sleep in his system before he returned to his apartment where an energetic Sapnap awaited him.

Dream really wished he could've just driven George back to his apartment.

But instead, he had to drive George to *Jade's* apartment because that's what George wanted, to surprise her with the news that his flight got moved up and he was back a few hours earlier than



before.

It would have been so, so, *so* much easier to take George anywhere else knowing he wasn't throwing him in the lion's den. But Dream *knew* it was a lion's den, but he was too scared to tell him.

"I'll text you if I'm up for some Minecraft later," is George's final goodbye as he shuts the door to Dream's passenger side of the car. Dream watches as he walks down the familiar path towards Jade's apartment building, where his form was illuminated by the hues of the setting sun. He was wearing a hoodie and sweats and untied converse shoes, and he walked slowly and drowsily as he'd just woken up from his nap. But to Dream, he looked so perfect.

Dream sighed, and pulled the car out of park.

If he was a better man, he'd leave that car parked and sprint down that sidewalk in two, three strides. He would stop George from opening that apartment door and tell him the truth he'd been so petrified to say aloud.

Dream was a coward.

That reality slowly sunk in as he made the drive back to his own apartment.

---

He got the text a half hour later. The text that made him grab his coat and slip into shoes and bound down the familiar campus sidewalk.

**Sapnap:** dude come over asap

Even as Dream responded with a variety of questions and panicked assumptions, Sapnap didn't respond.

His mind jumped to the worst: maybe there was some kind of accident. Maybe something unthinkable happened.

Or maybe he found a cool seed on Minecraft and wanted to show it off to Dream.

There was no feeling worse than uncertainty to Dream, the man who rarely lived a life without constant, unforgiving clarity.

There was no shouting or commotion audible from behind the front door of the apartment, so Dream figured that was a good enough sign that no tragedies had occurred, yet the lack of response from Sapnap was ever ominous.

Even as Dream managed to wriggle the key into the according lock and nudge open the front door, no differences were visible from the apartment. George was nowhere to be seen, and Quackity and Karl weren't here either.

But Sapnap was, and his thoughts hit Dream with the weight of a truck.

Dream could *feel* Sapnap's thoughts before he heard them, could absorb the painstaking worry as soon as the door clicked shut behind him. Dream's eyes settled on Sapnap's form from where he was sitting on the counter, head held in his hands before Dream caught his gaze.

Sapnap's thoughts were in such shambles that they didn't come to Dream at first. They were

presented to him like a bundle of tangled string; too many emotions were imbedded into his conscience.

“Dream,” Sapnap starts, eyes wide and hands gripping the counter tightly enough that his knuckles turned white. “Something... happened.”

Dream feels his heart leap to his throat. “Yeah?” he asks shakily.

“Jade, she... Apparently...”

The rest was drowned out as Dream faded into the fateful claws of his own thoughts.

But he already knew what Sapnap was going to say by the tone of voice.

He felt like he was drowning in the thickness of his own regret. He felt like it was clamping its talons over his eyes and mouth, dragging him further and further into the darkest depths of his mind.

Dream could *see* what had happened within the flashes of Sapnap’s mind: a poor, unsuspecting George knocking twice on Jade’s front door before letting himself in with the key he had on his keyring. Dream could perfectly imagine George’s small smile, giddy with excitement as he nudged open the door and tip-toed inside to surprise his girlfriend.

George had caught her, red-handed. He saw her through an ajar bedroom door, key still clutched in his hand. The very key she gave him.

George caught Jade tangled in her bedsheets with somebody else, and when she saw him, she looked sorry. Not for him, though. For herself.

George fled, naturally, as he didn’t need to hear her hasty excuses, her half-assed begging and pleading for him to *wait*.

He’d come home and, in a rush, told everything to Sapnap, the words tumbling out before George had processed them himself. Since then, he’d holed himself up in the safety of his bedroom, where there was no one to ask if he was *okay* and if he *needed anything*.

Dream was devastated.

George had to go through all of *that* because of his own cowardice?

*He needs you so badly, man*, is all Sapnap is thinking as his kind gaze focuses on Dream’s eyes. For once in maybe all the time Dream has known Sapnap, nothing else was on his mind. No shenanigans, no suspicious counter thoughts. Only George, and the dreading sense of worry.

*For once*, Dream thinks, *I’m going to really be there for him*.

Even if Dream feels sick with worry and dread at the sight that will be awaiting him as he opens George’s bedroom door, he figures he deserves it.

Dream deserved this outcome.

George did not.

I promise once this arc is done there will finally be more romance stuff

# Chapter 12

## Chapter Notes

"Put your head on my shoulder  
Hold me in your arms, baby  
Squeeze me oh-so-tight  
Show me that you love me too"  
- lyrics from "put your head on my shoulder" by Paul Anka

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

### *Dream*

By the time Dream finally nudged open the door to George's room and Sapnap's thoughts faded to nothing behind him, he felt so sick with worry and dread that it physically weighed him down.

Honestly, Dream would say he expected to see George all balled up in bed crying and clutching a box of tissues, but that would be a lie. He knew George. He'd pretend to be tough until the very last minute when he thought no one was watching. So, Dream wasn't particularly shocked when he found George flat on his back on his bed, phone screen illuminating his face. He looked blank: not sad, not happy, not angry. Just... nothing. Dream's expression softened.

"Hey," he says gently, shutting the door behind him. George's eyes flicker away from his phone screen and he catches Dream's eyes.

"Hi," he says back, but he doesn't turn his phone off or set it down. He seemed really fixated on the screen. "Sapnap told you what happened, I figure?"

Dream nods slowly, the bed sinking as he sits beside George cautiously. "Yeah... listen, man. I know that must've been really hard, to put it lightly, and you might not want to talk about it, but just let me know when you *do* want to talk about it, alright?"

George meets his eyes again, briefly, to give Dream a hint of what was going on in his head. "It's whatever," George says, shrugging nonchalantly. "I'm fine." Dream didn't have to analyze the slight shake to George's hands to know this was a lie: it was written all over his face, how his fake smile didn't reach his eyes, how his words sounded so drained of all energy.

"Okay," Dream says. He flops over to lay down beside George, and in curiosity, he asks, "whatcha looking at?"

George shrugs. "Nothing important." Dream is quiet, not prying, so George finally admits, "I'm looking at our old messages.... You know? Looking for clues, or something that would hint that she was, you know-" He cuts himself off, but he didn't need to continue. They both knew what he meant.

"You shouldn't do that to yourself," Dream says, and very gently, he pries the phone from George's grip, clicks it off, and sets it on the bed beside him. George is quiet, so quiet it absolutely terrifies him. Now that there's no phone for George to distract himself with, he's looking at Dream, but *really* looking at him in a way that Dream feared he could actually read his thoughts.

George sits up enough that his eyes are level with Dream's, both sitting up on the bed and looking at each other. Dream gulps, and by the way George's eyes flicker to his throat, he figured he noticed this.

"Dream," George starts, voice hushed. "You- could you..." He sighs and looks at his own lap as he finally squeezes the words out, "did you *know*?"

Ah, there they are. The fateful words.

Dream could lie. He could deny, and George would never know.

But as George's eyes flickered up to his own, the kind, warm, brown irises drawing secrets out of him he didn't want them to, Dream physically couldn't do it anymore. He couldn't call himself a friend if he was going to act as a foe.

Mutely, Dream nods as his eyes settle on his own lap in utter shame, but he can feel George's gaze burning into him. "I did," he whispers hoarsely.

He felt like these two words were the utterance of a death sentence.

George is silent.

As Dream works up the courage to look up at him, George didn't give him anything. No expressions, no words, nothing. Dream gulps before he finally says,

"George?"

George breaks their gaze and stares up at the ceiling. His lips were pressed together in a thin line in a way Dream had never seen them before; if George was irritated, his brow would twitch and he'd play his own irritation off as a joke, but this was so, so *different*.

He was *pissed*.

"I can't tell what you're thinking," Dream whispers, and he hated how weak he sounded. He was begging him, really. George won't look at him, still. "Please tell me what you're thinking," he adds. His voice was so quiet, almost inaudible, but George could hear him.

Dream didn't know he was reaching for George, to hold his shaking hands or just *hold* him until George smacked his hands away entirely.

"You don't *get* to know what I'm thinking, Dream!" George bursts, and in this display of anger, he springs up from the bed as if to get as far away from Dream as possible. Dream's eyes widen. "I can't believe- how long did you know?"

Dream sighs. "Since a little before winter break."

George whirls on him, eyes wide and angry, brows raised in disbelief. "Since *before*- so you spent those calls knowing my girlfriend was cheating on me?" Dream was quiet, but George continued, "you looked at me just *knowing* that my girlfriend was- was fucking some other guy?"

Dream's throat felt so dry, and so tight that he couldn't breathe as he found himself rising to his feet too. "Look, I'm--"

"Sorry?" George spits. "Yeah, I bet you are."

The silence is so heavy, Dream feels like it's pulling him to the floor, and then all the way to below

the ground, where he could shrink and shrivel and not listen to the words he deserved to hear. He felt as if this all was his own fault, somehow, Jade cheating on George; his insecurities were telling him it was all his fault. That he was the factor that drove Jade and George apart, the very thing that made Jade so afraid of her own relationship that she felt the need to abandon it entirely.

Jade asked George to meet his family not out of innocent intent, but as a way to test him. A way to test his *loyalty* in fear that George wasn't actually interested in her at all.

When George told her no, she broke.

Dream knew that's what happened, but he still felt responsible. Like this was *his fault, his fault, his fault*.

It's George who breaks the silence again as he says, "Did you plan on never telling me?" Something told Dream that George wasn't looking for answers. He was looking for a way to release these emotions bubbling inside of him.

"I- I tried to," Dream says, and George scoffs. There's something of a laugh, but it isn't kind, and it isn't out of gentle amusement. It's a bitter, hallow sound as George meets Dream's eyes once again, and if Dream squinted a little, it would look like George is smiling. But he knew better.

"How hard did you try, Dream?" George retorts, "how long are you going to stand here with me saying you're sorry and *pretending* that you care?"

"I know I fucked up, okay?" Dream says, tone becoming more irritated, "but I'm not pretending that I care. I really do care about you."

"Oh, you do?" George says back, "don't you see how that contradicts the fact you- you let me walk in on-"

"I know, George!" Dream snaps. George's eyes widen, and he's shocked to silence. Dream feels his own loud words ring back to him. "I know I'm a shitty friend, I know I should've just told you, but- that doesn't mean I don't *care*. Because..." *I care so much that it physically hurts me.*

"That doesn't explain a fucking thing," George starts. Dream could see the light waning, the crack in the door swinging shut as his chances to get through to George were getting smaller and smaller. He felt as if he'd run smack into a wall— one of the many walls George had up. He wished he could believe Sapnap's thoughts of *he needs you, man*. If anything, it was Dream who needed George.

"I just, I-" Dream falters as he sees George turn away from him, "I didn't want to be the one to break your heart, George." Something in George's face breaks. Something in the iron resolve fades, and all that's left is the shell of a man who's been really, deeply hurt. When he looks at Dream, he doesn't look angry. He just looks tired, and it absolutely shatters Dream to pieces. "That's it. I was so focused on not hurting you that I *did*, and- and." Dream's throat closes more, but he chokes out the words, "I'm *so* sorry."

Dream felt as if he could see the fight leave George's body as he watches him slump onto his bed, numb, muscles slack as he wedged his face into the blankets. He looked so weak, so tired that it hurt to look at.

Dream sits on the edge of the bed once again. Even if their fight was still heavy in the air, Dream was determined to do what he could to help George.

A memory hit him at once for reasons he couldn't place. It had been after that frat party that

Wilbur had dragged him to where Dream found a very, very drunk George he ended up having to carry home. They had been strangers then, still trying to figure each other out.

*“I hope I get really sad,” George had said with a small sigh. He’d been standing in his bathroom with the bright lights illuminating his tired eyes, waiting for Dream to come and carry him over to his room. His eyes were very dilated, a signal he was still very much intoxicated. Dream’s brows furrow in return.*

“What?”

*“So I’ll have an excuse to like, sit in the shower. With my clothes on,” George insisted, as if his slurred words made complete sense as he motions to the half-shower half-tub to the other side of the bathroom.*

The memory felt ironic, if anything, because now George was sad, *really* sad, and Dream didn’t know what to do.

“Come on,” Dream says, giving George a prod from where he was mushing his face into his blankets, “let’s go sit in the shower with our clothes on.”

George lifts his head and looks at him with a mix of confusion and irritation before it seemed he slowly recounted his own drunken words from all those months ago.

Dream would’ve accepted it if George yelled at him, even thrown shit at him. But he didn’t. Instead, George rose to his feet, walked past Dream, and dragged himself over to the bathroom where Dream hesitantly followed. (He ignored Sapnap’s thoughts of *are they having sex without me?*)

Dream didn’t think this would actually work. Really, he’d only thrown out the idea as bait for George to yell at him to go away if he needed to. But maybe Sapnap was right. Maybe George really did need him, despite everything.

So, Dream shut the door behind them, pushed back the shower curtain and turned on the hot water of the shower. He then shucked off his hoodie but left his shirt, looking over at George who slumped to sit on the edge of the tub to wait for the water to heat up. While his uncharacteristic silence was worrisome, Dream didn’t break this quietness as he took his place to sit on the edge of the tub beside George until the water was hot enough to fog up the mirror.

“After you,” Dream says, bowing dramatically and waving to the shower. George cracks a small smile at him before, after one more skeptical glance in his direction, he climbs into the shower with his sweats and shirt on. It was bizarre to watch someone get in the shower with their clothes on, but oddly fascinating. Dream watched as the gray material of George’s clothing dampened and darkened in color until the material was clinging to George’s skin.

“Well, are you coming in?” George says, pushing the wet hair out of his eyes so he could meet Dream’s eyes. Dream didn’t realize he’d been waiting for George’s approval until it was granted to him.

Maybe he had been hesitant to come into George’s life again, but here George was, beckoning him back into it

Sure, there was tension between them. But Dream felt stupid for thinking this tension would be enough to rip them apart.

“Yeah, I am,” Dream says, and George scoots over enough in the tub for Dream to clamber in and

sit down beside him. They were firmly pressed together as this bathtub likely was not intended for two fully-grown men to sit in side-by-side, but they made it work. Dream pulled the curtain shut to avoid spilling even more water than they already had and relished in the odd yet satisfying feeling of the hot water making the material of his clothing tighten around his skin.

“This is a weird thing to do,” George says, voice drowned out by the sound of the pouring water around them. Dream pushes his own hair out of his eyes, to properly see him. He was beginning to realize how desperately he needed a haircut.

“It was your idea,” Dream retorts, but not without a smile. George smiles back, but as he holds Dream’s gaze, the smile slowly dies.

“Why?” George asks. His brows raise and he doesn’t let go of Dream’s eye contact. “Why- why did she..?”

Dream lets go of a sigh. “She was scared.”

“Of what?”

Dream readjusts himself on the slippery porcelain of the bathtub before he dares to look back at George. “Being alone,” he simplifies, “so... she let you go first.”

George breaks their gaze as his hair is pushed into his face by the water. Dream can tell he’s pressing his trembling lips together. “She, she wasn’t alone,” George mutters, words drowning in the falling water, “maybe I wasn’t fully in love with her yet, but she wasn’t-” He cuts himself off and draws his knees to his chest, hugging them to himself as he rests his chin on top of them. “Did I not- was I not good enough?”

Dream feels his heart clench in his chest before finally, in an assertive, certain voice, he says, “George, look at me.”

George doesn’t look at him, so Dream takes a patient breath and tries again, “George.” Bright, dark gold eyes meet his, and in that moment from where they were sitting in George’s shower with their clothes on, soaking wet, Dream felt like he’d never been more connected with someone. Because even after he nearly fucked everything up, even if George was still a little mad at him and Dream was still mad at himself, nothing was going to break them apart.

“It’s not your fault,” Dream says, his voice turning soft as George was searching his eyes for something: validation. “It’s not your fault, it’s not your fault.”

George’s eyes widen as something about Dream telling him this wasn’t his fault struck a nerve as, in an instant, George’s face ducked down but for a moment Dream could see how his eyes had screwed shut and his hands flew to cover his face. Dream figured he might have imagined it until he heard the first small sob from beside him, and his eyes widened for a second. Dream had always been exceptionally terrible with comforting people as usually, their panicked thoughts would swarm him like an angry hive.

But George was quiet aside from his muffled, shaking sobs. Dream couldn’t stand it anymore. In an instant, Dream was wrapping his arms tight around George, tugging him close to him until he was fully tucked into a hug. At first, George seemed surprised by the action and Dream feared he’d crossed a boundary until all at once, George clung onto him. In fact, he melted into the hug, face wedging into the crook of Dream’s neck and arms wrapping around his middle tighter and tighter until he couldn’t be closer. Dream reciprocated, his arms resting around the middle of George’s back, his cheek resting on George’s head as he did so.



George was shaking, but not from the cold. He was shaking and crying so much that Dream wasn't quite sure what to do with him aside from just hold him close. George's tears were lost in the water from the shower but he figured that was for the best as it might kill him having to see George's tears, but George was here in his arms, and he was safe.

Dream's body reacted before he asked it to, his hands rubbing gently along George's spine, his arms tugging him in closer until they couldn't *be* closer. And, even after George's chest stopped jumping with his choked sobs and the tears must've stopped, he stayed there in Dream's arms for however long he needed to. It might've been a few minutes. It might've been an hour.

Eventually, George raised up his arm and turned off the water, and in wonder, Dream watched the remains of the shower trickle down the drain with a final gurgle of farewell until his attention was brought back to George, who didn't seem willing to move away from this embrace. Dream's lips stretch into a smile. So George was secretly clingy after all.

"Hey," Dream says, "you're getting cold, why don't we get changed?" George makes a face at him,

"I'm not cold." He shivers profusely as he says this, and Dream gives a short laugh at it. It was hard to laugh as George's voice was still sniffing and logged with the tears he'd cried, but the red rims to his eyes were already fading.

"Sure you're not."

Even if they were both shivering in their soaking-wet clothes and damp hair, neither of them were quite ready to let go of each other. Dream knew that as soon as they stepped out of this shower, neither of them would likely speak about this again, or hold onto each other in this same way. It made Dream want to hold onto George just a little bit longer and take advantage of this ability to just *be*.

In that moment, all that mattered was the feeling of George's face pressed against his neck, or the content sighs he'd give whenever Dream would relax and rest his chin on George's head. He'd rested his hands somewhere near the small of George's back, and George's arms were still wrapped tight around Dream's middle. There was something so unfairly intimate about being so, *so* close when there were only skin-clinging shirts separating their bodies.

"Dream?" George eventually says, his voice vibrating against his neck. Dream hums in acknowledgement. "Thank you, for... everything."

Dream's eyes close for a second as he basks in the warmth of this moment. "Thanks for forgiving me."

George nods against his neck, "how could I not forgive you?"

The question seemed rhetorical, but Dream had an answer:

Because they were bound by something they both couldn't define.

Dream didn't *need* to define their bond, didn't need to be given a title or name. He just needed George.

can you tell I'm still trying to build Jade

# Chapter 13

## Chapter Notes

"I used to hear a simple song  
That was until you came along  
Now in its place is something new  
I hear it when I look at you"  
- lyrics from "I hear a symphony" by Cody Fry

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

### *George*

It was dreadful, this situation.

George hated it. He hated how he'd memorized everything about *her*, *her*— he couldn't think her name anymore— the way her nose scrunches when she's joking about something, how her eyes crescent when she's smiling wide, how she had this habit of grabbing for George's arm when she was nervous about something.

George even knew how she looked at the golden hour where the sun streamed through the shitty blinds of his bedroom window, how the golden light would paint her face as if she were a piece of art. In so many ways, she was. In so many was, she was a masterpiece.

He hated how he missed her so much when he wasn't sure if he fully loved her in the first place. There was a small voice in the back of his head telling him he didn't, and maybe it was right.

Maybe he didn't love her, but that didn't make this any easier.

But maybe, just maybe, if George opened his eyes enough, he could see the silver lining hidden behind the storm clouds.

After the night where, admittedly, he'd taken his frustrations out on Dream, after he'd actually cried in the shower sitting in drenched clothes, he let go of that stubbornness for a few minutes as he just *let* Dream help him. He let Dream turn off the shower water and keep him wrapped in a hug even when they both were wet and cold. He let Dream sit beside him in bed and fall asleep there. He let Dream offer his hoodie, and he wore it.

George, at first, felt a great deal of frustration about the fact that Dream had lied to him for longer than he was comfortable with. In all honesty, the frustration was still there even after Dream literally helped George back up to his feet again and put the broken pieces together. But as Dream fell asleep, cheek pressed against George's shoulder, hair half-damp and pillow tucked into his chest, the frustration faded away in an instant. It was incredible, really, how quickly the baleful feelings vanished at the sight of how peaceful Dream was. Even though George could physically see how much the weight of guilt was crushing him alive, he also could see that there wasn't a single ill-intentioned bone in his body.

So, George didn't feel the need to nudge Dream awake and tell him to scoot over. To not be so close.

But, frankly, he couldn't. He was growing to need him too much.

George fell asleep with his cheek pressed to Dream's hair that night. They didn't wrap their arms around each other, they didn't get any closer. They didn't need to.

Or maybe they did need to, because when George woke up to a cold bed beside him the following morning, he felt his heart prick with minor disappointment.

Instead, he woke up to the feeling of something on his forehead.

Disoriented, George cracks his eyes open as he raises a hand to his own forehead before peeling away what seemed to be a sticky-note that had been stuck to his face.

*Don't come to comp sci today :)*

*(I'll take notes for you, just sleep in, will ya?)*

- *Dream*

The smile that came across George's face felt so natural, it was a little terrifying. How could he not smile, looking down at the scrawled, smudged black ink and the hastily drawn smiley-face? As much as George wanted to fight and say *no, I'm fine* or something of equal denial, George realized how heavy his limbs were, how much his eyelids begged to close again.

George laid his head back on his pillow and stuck the sticky-note to the bedside table beside him. Instead of rising with his phone alarm, he let it ring and just slept. He figured he owed it to himself.

---

At first, the voice was muffled.

George was in a field of roses and thorns, and what had previously been a serene, silent setting was now being broken by some distant humming of a voice. George lets his eyes slip closed, and let the sounds of the far noises fade into the eerie atmosphere that had wrapped his arms tight around him.

But then it got louder.

"Oh, George!"

George cracks his eyes open.

Shit, had he fallen asleep again?

"Oh GEOOOOOOORGE!"

George grumbles something probably inaudible as he groggily wipes forces himself to his feet and walks across the apartment with his eyes practically closed. He was aware he probably had ink on his face from falling asleep on his notes again, this fact proved by how his back had a dull ache to it. He groans slightly at the voice growing louder and louder until his brain finally woke up enough to process who this was:

Dream.

"GEORGE!" Dream shouts, a weak thump against the front apartment door. "Come onnnnn, my arms are full, I can't open the doooooor-" Okay, now he was just whining.

Exasperated, George gathers his wits enough to open the door to his apartment and, sure enough, there was Dream.

Dream was like a golden retriever, George decided, because the way his ears perked and his eyes widened when he saw George was, unmistakably, dog-like. Dimples gathered at the edges of Dream's wide-spread lips as he met George's eyes.

"Sorry," George says sheepishly, voice cracking a little, "I fell asleep on accident."

Dream's high-energy seems to knock down a few notches at that, and he gives him an apologetic smile. "Oh, alright. Are you still tired?"

George shrugs. "Nah, it's fine." Then he decides to actually use his eyes and look Dream up and down.

(No, not like *that*.)

Dream was, first of all, holding a rather large crate that seemed to contain something big and *very* alive if the distant sounds of scuttling were anything to go off of. Next, Dream had a bag slung over his shoulder and his phone held in his hand. George felt a pang of guilt as holding this many things really would prove difficult to open a door.

"What's all of this?" George asks inquisitively, brows furrowing slightly as he tries to make a guess of what the crate could possibly contain. Dream only gives him a cheeky grin as a clue.

"You'll see," Dream says as, once George steps aside, he lets himself in and sets down the many contents he had been holding.

Wordlessly, George shut the door behind him and ventured over to the kitchen to get Dream one of those sodas he always liked, and figured he could save the carton of ice cream in the freezer for later.

"So," Dream begins, setting his bag on the couch and the crate on the coffee table, "I decided to bring you something- oh my- come *on*-" It sounded like Dream was having something of a struggle judging the strain of his voice. Yet, as George looked around, it seemed that Dream had finally tugged the lock free of the crate and out came a- was that a *cat*?

George's brows raise, "Dream- did you..?"

Dream's smile was still timid even as he was practically pounced on by the creature. "I decided to bring Patches with me because, well, you know, you probably miss your cat from Britain and I *tried* to just carry her over here but she hates being carried for too long but I really wanted to show her to you because I thought she might help make you feel like you're at home but-"

"Dream," George intercepts, and as he does, Dream is forced to meet his eyes as his own rambling is shown to a stop. Dream's brows raise a little and his bright, bright eyes flicker down to look at George's true smile. "Thank you," George murmurs, and that was all he knew how to say in this moment as he looked at Dream, with his messy, unkempt hair and Patches rubbing her face against his neck and purring gratefully as he absently ran his fingers through her fur.

Dream's previously tense form relaxed considerably. How was it that Dream always knew what to do?

Dream steps closer to him and George offers his hands out to Patches who first sniffs his hands, apparently decided he wasn't a threat, and allowed herself to be transferred from Dream's arms to

George's. George ignored Dream's taunting wheezes as he coos down at Patches, who seemed to take an immediate liking to him. Despite being a regular over at Dream's apartment, Patches was often missing as apparently she stayed in Dream's room whenever guests were over. Though, Wilbur was joking that George was their third roommate at this point.

"I guess she likes you," Dream admits with a small laugh. George offers the same laugh back as really, watching Patches rub her head against his chest and nuzzle closer to him was somewhat therapeutic.

"I guess so," George adds fondly, making silly faces at Patches as if she were an infant and not a cat. Despite her unimpressed look back at him, she didn't move. Pets really must be like their owners after all.

"Oh, one more thing," Dream says, and Patches ears prick up at the sound of Dream rustling through the backpack he had set on George's couch before apparently settling on something, opening the zipper, and pulling the contents out.

Dream really had to stop if George was ever meant to live without him.

In Dream's hands were a bag of chocolate raisins. Not just any chocolate raisins—*the* chocolate raisins.

Karl and Quackity in particular always teased George for his specific chocolate raisin preferences as he insisted this one brand always had the best kind. The only time he managed to get anyone to buy these for him was for his birthday a few months back, and the time that Sapnap lost some stupid bet to him and had to drive all the way across town to get George his beloved raisins.

But here they were. It wasn't George's birthday, and Dream hadn't lost a bet. Now that George thought about it, Dream probably went during his lunch to get the raisins before coming back to campus in time for his afternoon classes.

It was unmistakable how George's heart swelled at the sight of Dream's proud smile as he held the bag of raisins before him like a trophy.

George loosens his arms as Patches wriggles in a small sign to be let go, but his eyes don't lose sight of Dream, even as Patches leapt to the ground with a small *thump* and rubbed herself along their legs.

"Dream, you did *not*," George says, a little breathless as he looks from the raisins to Dream's face, back to the raisins.

Dream laughs, nose scrunching. "What? It's not like I'm giving you a thousand dollars. It's... just some raisins." Dream raises his brows at him in comedy, "but not just *any* raisins," he adds, face deadpan and voice changing to what must be a weak attempt to imitate George.

George gives him a look that makes them both laugh before the dust settles, and George looks at Dream. *Really* looks at him.

He looks at Dream and the bag of chocolate-covered raisins he had driven all the way across town to get for George. He looks at the freckles that danced across his cheeks like stars in a night sky, and the wide, ceaseless smile that caused little dimples to gather around his cheeks. He looked at the kind eyes that he had stared into so many times yet could never get quite enough of. Maybe until last night, Dream had been a mystery, a puzzle George had a good deal of fun trying to figure out.

But George *knew* Dream now. He knew all about how Dream could literally read minds but still looked for the best in people. He knew all about how he was willing to get his cat into a crate to bring over to his friend to remind him of home.

Then it clicked.

It all came together as the sun faded just a centimeter lower in the sky, enough that the sun came through the curtains of the kitchen and illuminated Dream's skin like a golden glow. The iris of his eye closest to the sunlight was illuminated like a collection of emerald stars.

George realized what he probably should have realized a long time ago as he watched Dream's eyes scrunch closed with the bright smile he gave him, and George watched, mesmerized, as the rays of sunlight sang like violins as they painted strokes of beauty onto Dream's face. He watched as the way Dream ran a hand through his unruly hair was the strike of a cello, how the connected contact of their eyes was the ringing of a viola.

George was able to put his feelings into simpler terms in this moment.

What he felt for Jade was a fling of a tune, something interesting but mundane with an instrument or so.

What he felt for Dream was a *symphony*. An array of sounds and notes and voices, all blending together into one, chilling, tear-jerking sound of *music* that was the most beautiful music he had ever heard.

Then it all stopped as reality settled in. As he realized he was here, still trying to learn himself and what he was feeling. Maybe he was projecting his broken heart onto Dream, but something deep inside him was telling him otherwise.

Either way, George found himself meeting Dream's eyes with a fearlessness that scared him, watching as Dream held those god damned raisins in his hands with that pure smile that expected nothing in return.

Before he could stop himself, George rushed forward and wrapped his arms tight around Dream in a way that begged him not to question his actions. He fisted the material of Dream's hoodie tight in his hands and buried his face in his chest, and if the rapidly beating heart in his chest wasn't evidence enough, soft melodies sang in George's mind as he felt a pair of warm hands press into his back and just *hold* him in was he didn't know he needed.

"Thank you," George says into Dream's hoodie, and it was muffled, but the vibrating of Dream's laughter was enough that he knew he heard him.

Dream hums, chocolate raisins being set somewhere near him so he could hug George closer, tighter, and George felt like his throat was closing and he was *dying* just because it was so painfully obvious, how had he not *seen* it, how he was feeling?

"You give nice hugs," Dream drawls, and even if they'd been hugging for a long time, Dream didn't make George feel weird about it. "If only you weren't, like, a little cat."

George snorts. "*A little cat?*" he mocks. "Dream, you did *not* just call me a *little cat*."

"I did," Dream wheezes, no shame audible in his voice. "It's just- it seems like you aren't into hugs. Like, whenever I go to hug you you're all like *rawr*-"

George's jaw drops as he lifts his face from Dream's chest to properly look up at him, but Dream

was laughing so hard he could feel his chest jumping against his. Dream seemed to have got himself all wound up as he threw his head back and laughed and laughed at something that, in reality, wasn't funny at all.

"You are such an idiot," George mutters, but his cheeks were warm by the time Dream cracked his eyes open enough to look down at George once again.

"Just admit that you're clingy," Dream says, brows raising as a way to say he already knew he won this battle as George was literally in the middle of tugging Dream closer to him. George makes a face at him before re-burying his face into Dream's chest before grumbling out,

"M not clingy." The true irony is that George's voice was all muffled by the material of Dream's hoodie.

Despite the patronizing laugh that followed, Dream's arms wound around George's shoulders and held him close, no judgements hidden within his jokes and teases.

Later on, as the sun wasn't shining on them through the blinds and the floor became cold enough they had to huddle up on the couch and get a blanket from the cabinet, as they were well into the bag of chocolate-covered raisins with more than two soda cans littered around them, Patches curled asleep on George's lap, it was undeniable.

Maybe George didn't know it yet as he was a little too messed up to know anything right now, other than his physical needs. He didn't know what he wanted, really, or what he *needed*.

But somewhere far away, in a place George hadn't let himself go yet, he *knew*.

He knew because choirs of violins sang to him when Dream looked his way. And yes, the description is so stupid, so cheesy and unbearable, but it was true.

George was in love with Dream.

He was so, so in love with him.

## Chapter End Notes



# Chapter 14

## Chapter Notes

"It is seemingly worsened everyday  
All this shit of yours around my house  
If I could've had it any other way  
Then by now I would've chucked it out  
But it seems to wanna stick around"  
- lyrics from "shampoo bottles" by peach pit

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

### *Dream*

As the days dragged along and Dream watched George get back on his feet once again, there was one thing left to do:

Get George's stuff from Jade's apartment.

See, breakups seem to happen in slow motion as, in reality, they have a lot of steps to them. First, there's the preceding stage before the actual breakup of the building resentment of one another yet the inability to fully let go. Then is the *actual* breakup which is usually short-lived and hard to process in the moment. In reality, the fact the relationship is over doesn't *hit* until hours, maybe days later. And after all of that hell and processing comes the final stage of the breakup:

Getting your things.

Dream had already helped George sort out the things that belonged to Jade from his apartment: a stray chapstick, a shirt, the pair of shoes she'd forgotten to take back with her last Saturday, the tea packets she left in George's cupboard for the mornings she would wake up in his bed, the coconut shampoo she had in his shower.

It had been hard to watch, really, the previous stages where George would walk around his apartment that seemed covered in Jade from her stray t-shirts to her soap in his shower.

It was even harder to watch as he tried to take it all away. He would smile and laugh as he held conversation with Dream, but his hands would shake from where they held the shampoo bottle before he tossed it into the bag looped around his shoulder.

Dream also watched how that bag, the bag filled with the memories and items George had shoved in, stayed in the corner of George's closet for longer than it probably should've.

"I'll take it over to her," Dream says as he gives George's shoulder a sympathetic pat. Currently, they were huddled at George's kitchen table, Sapnap sitting on the counter and scrolling mindlessly through his phone while Dream and George had their comp sci notes spread across the meager surface of the table, supposedly studying and getting some assignments done but, in reality, getting in heated debates over which non-Minecraft game was their favorite.

Dream didn't have to specify what *it* was and who was *she*. The somewhat deflated yet determined

look and George's eyes told him everything he needed to know: he was ready to let go.

So, Dream took that bag, slung it over his shoulder, bid George goodbye and faced the mess he convinced himself he had made.

"You don't have to," George had said, hand clasped tight around his wrist. Dream really, really wished he could've read his mind in that moment to know what thoughts lied behind such kind eyes. He wished he could hear if George's thoughts were *angry* at him because he felt like he deserved such anger.

"I do," Dream answers, and by the slight falter to George's expression, he figured he picked up on the fake smile Dream was displaying. But, nonetheless, Dream shut the front door behind him, took a breath, and made the trek to Jade's apartment.

It felt wrong knocking on her apartment door and hearing her meager, tired thoughts before she managed to open the door. It all felt wrong as Dream watched her eyes widen a little once she met his gaze. She had on a loose shirt and shorts, her hair fastened into a loose up-do with the least amount of makeup Dream had ever seen her in. It was incredibly disheartening to see Jade so... well, bare.

Her thoughts felt and sounded tired as she barely seemed awake, this much evident by the visible bags under her eyes. As much as Dream wanted to take his own guilt and project it onto her in the form of anger, he couldn't.

*He's probably here to yell at me.*

*I deserve it.*

*But George shouldn't have-*

*No, I fucked up.*

*I deserve this.*

*I wish George told me he loved m-*

*But I shouldn't have-*

*Why did Dream have to-*

It took every grain of energy in Dream's body to keep his strained smile from faltering further, yet before he could slip the too-heavy bag from his shoulder to offer out to Jade, her expression went from tired to angry as she said, "look, Dream. If you're here to yell at me and tell me all about how shitty I am, you can just-"

Dream holds his hands up in surrender. "No, no. Nothing like that." She pauses in surprise. "I just... came here to give you this." With that, Dream holds the bag out to Jade, which she looks at in momentary shock.

*I wouldn't have blamed George if he burned all this.*

Dream tried not to show signs of amusement at the thought as the imagery of George going as far to burn Jade's things was rather amusing.

He was far too kind to do such a thing.

(But he wouldn't put it past him.)

"Oh," Jade says, looking sheepish about her previous outburst as she took the bag from him. She opens it slightly to look at its contents that Dream already knew, given he helped pack it up; shirts, make-up- but there seemed to be one item she was fixated on as she fished a hand into the bag to pull out a calico cat stuffed animal. Dream didn't have to *read* her thoughts as the memories and images hit him all at once: George coming back from his fall break he spent looking for internships in New York where he brought back a stuffed animal for Jade as, apparently, she had left all of her favorite ones back at home in Washington.

"George gave this to me," Jade says simply, turning the cat over in her hands. It was clearly well love as the fur was a little matted in places, but her eyes glittered as she looked at it. "Sparkles.." She gives a dry laugh, "such a stupid name, but he- he named it that, so..." As she looked up to meet Dream's eyes, Dream's previously tense form was forced to relax a little as he noticed her previously bright eyes were now bright with unshed tears as she clutched tightly onto the cat. As they looked at each other, it was as if Jade had forgotten Dream was here as, in an instant, she blinked the tears and memories away, and straightened herself up.

"Sorry," she breathes, pushing the cat back into the bag, "that was- sorry." The silence between them is so loud as Jade shifts from foot to foot and Dream clears his throat before, for some reason unknown to humanity, Dream decided to open his mouth and say,

"I can help you get George's things, if you want." He was just as shocked as Jade as he says this as it goes without saying that packing up his friend's items with said friend's cheating girlfriend is more than just a *little* awkward, he couldn't help but feel a merciless sympathy at the guilt radiating off of her.

"You don't have to," Jade insists, but she was thinking *I have so much to pack up...*

"I don't mind," Dream answers. She gives him a skeptical look before she steps aside to let him in. The last time Dream had been in here was for game night where they all sat huddled around Jade's living room floor, coffee cups littered around the dining room table, attempting to get in some last-minute studying before the sun rose on the day of their final exams of the semester.

His heart clenched a little in his chest. He remembered how close Jade and George had been then. What happened?

Jade and Dream picked up the various items in silence, having an unspoken system of Dream holding open the designated bag and Jade stowing the item into it. Hardly a word was spoken, other than the necessary ones of "lets go over to the next room" and "oh, I think this was his, too." Dream was thankful for their external silence as Jade's thoughts were loud enough as is.

After about a half hour of rooting around the apartment and concluding that all of George's things were packed up, Dream figured this was where they parted ways, maybe for good.

But as always, Jade played a wild card as, just when he was going to the door, she called out, "hey, would you like some tea?"

Dream whirls around with some shock visible on his face as he turns to see Jade. Despite being able to know what she was thinking, he didn't really *understand* what she was thinking, but he nodded anyways. "Yeah... sure."

(Remember how much Dream hates tea? He really is something, isn't he?)

Dream sits at a stool pulled up to the counter as Jade rustles around her kitchen, putting tea bags into mugs and watching as the contents were submerged with boiling water. There still was silence... but maybe this time, it wasn't as suffocating.

"Dream," Jade finally says, as she sets down her clay mug in front of him with some undefined tea within it. "I just..." She takes a breath to compose herself, "I wanted to apologize to you."

Dream raises his brows. "To me?"

"Yeah..." Jade pulls up a stool next to him and takes a long sip of her own mug of tea. "I know you probably hate me right now-" Dream honestly hated how he little he hated her, "-but I wanted to apologize as, obviously, I blew things way out of proportion and I probably was really mean to you and-"

"Woah woah," Dream interrupts, brows raising higher and higher with each sentence. "Slow down, it's okay." He looks down at his own untouched mug of tea and instead uses it to warm his cold hands, "Jade, just... say what you're trying to say."

She looks at him long and hard, and all she's thinking right then is *I see why George likes him so much.*

Dream's face definitely doesn't heat up.

He definitely wasn't caught off guard with that statement.

"I was scared," she admits, "and... I blamed that fear on you."

"What do you mean?" Dream urges.

"I mean that- well, I'll just say it." She looks down at her hands, "I was scared of- of messing up. Again. Of- of loving George *too* much because..." *I've always loved too little*, is what she thinks. She continues without saying that bit aloud, "and, and I really... *did* love him, more than I wanted to-" she whispers, "it was scary, Dream. I know it sounds stupid but it's- it's fucking *scary* loving someone that much after knowing him for- what, seven months?" Jade exhales shakily, "and when I asked to come to Britain with him, and he said no, I knew then that maybe he... maybe he didn't *need* me as much as much as I needed him. And- and that's okay! At least... it should've been. I know, I know- I know I should've waited, I should've *talked* to him, I should've done- fucking *anything* else than- than- than get drunk, and-" Dream didn't have to look over at her, didn't have to hear her thoughts to know how the tears were welling, how her hands were shaking, how the regret and guilt and self-loathing were so thick and so vivid that it was overtaking her.

"But then I would look at you," Jade said slowly, "how it was so easy with you two, and how he just- he just *relaxed* whenever you walk into a room." She sighs, "at first, I was pissed. I was mad at you because I was threatened by you. But then... I think I began to realize the real problem." She sets the mug down. "George and I- we're not meant to be more than a few months of dating in college. And- obviously, at first, I... panicked. But now..." She looks over at Dream, eyes teary, "I realize that maybe I needed to let him go so... he didn't have to be tied down anymore."

*He always needed you*, she thinks as she wipes her eyes with her sleeves, *he never needed me much.*

Dream was momentarily speechless as truly, Jade's ranting was... something beautiful. His heart couldn't help but ache in sympathy, but the bigger part of him felt an overall interest in how quick she was to analyze and recognize her own feelings.

“I accept your apology, Jade,” Dream says finally, “and... I think if you give him some time, George will, too.”

Her gaze softened before she says, after a good deal of silence, “don’t let him go, Dream. Don’t let him go.”

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After returning back to George’s apartment, ceremonious and yielding his bag of items, the night faded away after George thanked him profusely and insisted to take him out for a midnight snack as an act of gratitude. The rest of the evening faded away, something like Dream waking up on George’s couch with drool dried on his chin and a blanket half-thrown over him, Xbox controller loosely clasped in his hands.

The following month had its ups and downs, but mostly ups as they seemed to be in the grace period of the earlier side of the semester where exams weren’t camping together and the subject matter didn’t make any sense. Weekends were still busy with streaming and late-night adventures with the usual crew, who went from places as thrilling as Karl’s apartment (a surprisingly scary place given that Quackity was his roommate) and interesting as a random forest they discovered while on a night drive.

One down for Dream was the fact he received via phone call that his parents decided to split up. Now, of course he wasn’t surprised given the fact its nearly impossible to surprise Dream, but what *was* upsetting was the fact that his poor high-schooler sister was going through this *and* the absolute hell that school was.

*“You can come over to my place whenever,” Dream had insisted, “I’ll go over and pick you up, and you can meet everybody.”*

*“Even Geooooorge?” she teases. Dream scoffs.*

*“Mm, I don’t know, I have the unsettling feeling you’re going to embarrass me in front of him,” he quips, and though she laughed, he could hear how she still was sniffing with the tears she must’ve spilled.*

After he hung up, Dream couldn’t help but feel sick.

He kept this information to himself as he wasn’t really sure how to say *hey, my parents finna split up* as immediately after, he walked into an apartment full of laughing, carefree college kids. So, he decided to put his phone down and laugh with them.

But it had been weeks.

Weeks of having to send too many *are you okay?* texts to his sister, weeks of pondering what he could and should have done to keep them together, if he made some kind of *mistake* somewhere because there was something sick of this parallel of his parents divorcing and Jade cheating on George.

It was all too much one night, really, as he’d sat in his room with no light aside from his phone. He laid flat on his back in bed, eyes half-open as he absently watched his instagram feed scroll by. It was midnight, and though he could hear the sounds of Sapnap having a few people over, he felt too tired to get a proper shirt on and put on a smile.

His thumb paused from scrolling as there was a video titled *my parents are divorced check* where a teenager, in the form of comedy, expressed their current experiences of going from house to house

every other week.

Something about it resonated.

It hit a little too close to home.

He just *broke*.

His phone slipped from his hands and, at first, he went to pick it back up, which was when he realized his hands were shaking tremendously. He hated how the only thoughts he could think of were how Drista must feel, all alone in two empty houses, no brother to keep her company and only one parent to sit with her at the dinner table each night.

There was nothing funny about it. There was nothing *okay* about it as all at once, the guilt hit him.

*I should've warned them.*

*I should've warned her.*

*I should've-*

*I should've-*

"Dream?"

Dream really wished he could've had the energy to stop his trembling, to lift his head from where he'd curled himself into a tight ball, but he simply couldn't. He didn't look up as he heard the door click shut, or as he felt the bed dip with weight beside him.

"Dream?" The voice was louder now, and he managed to open his eyes to see George, sitting beside him, worry written all over his face. Dream remembered the last and only time George had seen him like this, back at that party in the bathtub. George's face was painted with the heavy shadows around them, yet Dream could read him perfectly.

"Hey," George starts, hand cautiously setting on Dream's shoulder. "Do you wanna talk about it?"

Dream snuffles. Oh, he'd been crying? "Sorry," he blubbers, hating how his voice tremors, "sorry, sorry- I'm-"

George's brows crease together, but he waits, patient, until he continues. "I- I feel like it's my fault," he says simply. "Like- like if I did something differently- I could've made it- made it- made it so *this* didn't happen-"

George nods, even though he clearly didn't know what Dream was talking about. "They- my parents, they- they split up but I *knew* they were going to, I had to listen to it all of winter break a- and I- I couldn't tell Drista about it because, well-" He snuffles weakly, "she looked so happy that it was Christmas. I couldn't- but I should've- and I'm just a fuckin'- a fuckin' *coward*, George. I'm just-"

He cuts himself off as, in this moment of pure weakness, he sits up, the tears still heavy on his face as he says, "am I a bad person? George, is this- is this *all* my fault?"

George searches his eyes, and really searches them, before he finally says, "Dream, you're... the best person I've ever met." He gives a feeble smile, "don't tell Sapnap." Dream snuffles in an attempt to laugh before George continues, clearly fumbling to say the *right* words, whatever those

were. “I’m really sorry to hear you parents split up... that’s- that’s awful, but it’s also not your fault.” George smiles weakly, “it’s nobody’s fault, really.” Then his expression softens more as he scoots a little closer to Dream and murmurs, “it’s nobody’s fault... and especially not yours.”

Dream doesn’t crush George into a hug, maybe because that’s not what he felt like doing, but he leaned his head forward enough to just rest it on George’s shoulder. He laid his head there for a long time, but George didn’t move an inch: not to check his phone, not to readjust himself. He stayed, lifted a hand to run a hand through Dream’s hair, and waited for the tears to dry and the sniffing to cease.

“Let’s go somewhere,” George says quickly, giving Dream’s back a soft pat. “I think you need to get out of your own head.”

Dream gives a weak smile as he pulls his head from George’s smile, and looks at him. He looks at George, who was so damn *strong* and *resilient*, so perfect and sweet. He looked at George who knew exactly what to do and what to say to put Dream’s broken melody back together.

“Yeah... I think so too.”

*Don’t let him go, Dream*, Jade’s words replayed in his mind as he watched George lace up his shoes and toss him a sweatshirt, *don’t let him go*.

If there was anything he could do about it, Dream wouldn’t *ever* let him go.

## Chapter End Notes

character development go brr brr

# Chapter 15

## Chapter Notes

"I need a place to stay  
Where I can cover up my face  
Don't cry  
I am just a freak"  
lyrics from "freaks" by surf curse

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

### *George*

"Where are we going?"  
"Shh."

"Where are we-"

"Shh!"

Dream groans, and George laughs. Dream's constant inquiries of where George was leading him to was similar to that of his younger siblings in the back seat of a road trip. It was truly hard to believe that Dream wasn't a younger sibling with how much he whined like this.

Thankfully, tonight was a colder Friday night with no morning classes the following day, so the fact George was leading Dream around the outskirts of campus around midnight wouldn't bite them in the ass the following morning. Even if George had to sacrifice a night of sleep for this, for Dream, he'd do it anyway.

Walking into Dream's room to see him curled in on himself, hands clasped over his ears, body trembling and cheeks wet with tears had to be the most heartbreaking sight George had ever seen. It made his heart crumple in a way it never had before, and it made him *hurt* physically.

Maybe George wasn't the best with physical contact. It never had really been his thing; he never quite knew what to do with his hands— or *himself* for that matter— and he discovered that removing people from the situation was what he knew how to do. It was the same solution as when Dream seemed lost in his own head that night at the party, when George had grown tired of surface-level conversation with strangers and the cramped feeling of bodies all around him, so naturally, he left to look for Dream.

So, here they were, Dream whining like a child and George making faces at him and imitating him in an inaccurate American accent horrible enough to make Dream smack his arm and shout "*you actually suck!*"

But he was smiling, and laughing.

That was a start.

"Here we are," George proclaims cheerily, halting his walk once they reach an unceremonious fence. Yes, a metal, tall, menacing fence meant to keep people out at ridiculous hours of the night.



George rubs his hands against his goosebump-ridden arms as he swivels to look at Dream, who was merely raising his brows at him. “You... you took me across the fucking *entire* campus... to lead me to a FENCE?!”

George snickers. “No, you nimrod. Look.” With hands shaking from the cold, George pulls his phone from his pocket, activates the flashlight, and points it through the metal bars of fence to reveal a pool and hot tub warm enough that the steam was visible within the cool air. Sheepishly, George glances over to Dream, “I figured this was an upgrade from sitting in the shower with our clothes on,” he admits.

He figured Dream would roll his eyes, or give him a look that signaled he wasn’t so impressed with George’s tactics to cheer him up.

Instead, Dream looked touched.

There was a brief moment where, in the dim light of George’s phone flashlight, Dream’s bright eyes soaked up all the light and his smile reached up his face enough to leave creases around his lower lashes. It was the brightest smile George had seen from him all night.

It made his heart flip in his chest.

But all Dream says is, “you’re such an idiot” before he grabs the bars, places his feet accordingly, and wriggles himself up enough to eventually swing a leg over the fence, jump down, and look at George with a smug look to indicate that he knew he had the advantage of long legs.

“You dick,” George grumbles, clearly having much more of a struggle. But of course *helping* would be too much work as Dream was too busy *wheezing* at him from the other side of the fence as he watched the poor guy nearly fall and break his face.

“I dare you to go in the pool,” George says, toes curling on the edge of the cement perimeter of the glass-like surface of the water. He turns to face Dream, who probably did that thing where he raised his brows and narrowed his eyes in a sarcastic way, but it was too dark to properly see his expressions.

“Oh *hell* no,” Dream huffs, “hey, remember when I threw you in that freezing lagoon?”

George gives him an unimpressed look, but the snort that follows gives away his actual amusement, “how could I forget?”

There’s a few more moments of muted laughter and shivering before they look at each other, sighing as they both knew neither of them were brave enough to venture into the freezing pool, and wordlessly padded across the pool deck and over to the steaming, welcoming hot tub. As soon as George dipped his foot in, he sighed contently at the feeling of his freezing limbs buzzing pleasantly at the feeling of the hot, steaming water taking over.

He feels the water churn slightly as Dream steps in beside him, sitting close enough that he felt their knees bump.

Maybe getting in the hot tub with practically no clothes on wasn’t one of George’s brightest ideas.

George gulps and tips his head back to look at the sky as something of a distraction, his hand absently tracing over the surface of the water as he did so. Though, he frowned as he saw the depths of stars and the moon hidden behind a thick curtain of clouds. George sighs, “well, that ruins the option to stargaze, doesn’t it?”

Dream sighs too, “yeah... doesn’t that cloud kinda look like a chicken wing, though?”

“Ohhh, yeah, you’re right.”

The only sounds following that were the distant bubbling of the tub, the feeling of pressure from the jets comfortable against the small of his back. Something George loved about his and Dream’s relationship was their ability to just *be* without pressure to fill the space with unnecessary words. Conversations with no meaning, no real benefit to them like talking about the weather or homework— no one actually *cares* about either of those things.

George liked it like this, staring at the cloud-ridden night sky, sitting with Dream and-

Was that a *hand* above his knee?

Dream must’ve felt George jump at the feeling as in an instant, there was some splashing next to him as Dream hastily said “sorry! Sorry, I thought that was the seat...”

There’s more silence following, but this time, it isn’t as comfortable as before.

Because... George wished that wasn’t an accident.

He felt gross about it, like it was wrong to want that, but no matter how hard he tried, he couldn’t help it. He couldn’t help it that when their knees bumped together or Dream smiled so wide, his heart would *pound* inside his chest.

But, either George was going crazy, or Dream scooted closer to him.

No, that definitely was the case because now their entire legs were pressed together.

George gulps again.

Then he hears the voice, timid, but so determined at the same time. “George,” Dream says, voice soft.

George hadn’t even looked at him, but he knew *exactly* what he was going to say.

So, George dared to look at him, to turn his head and discover their faces were way, way, way closer than they should be, and at this distance, George could reach out his index finger and count each one of Dream’s freckles. *One, two, three, four, five-*

“George,” Dream murmurs again, but softer, a whisper, his eyes full of a want so intense that George felt it in his bones. “Can I...” Dream’s eyes flicker down to his lips before slowly raking up the rest of his face and meeting his eyes again. “Can I kiss you?”

The air is absolutely knocked from George’s lungs.

Is this real?

George resists the urge to pinch himself as he just says, “yes, *please*.”

And oh, he does.

It’s really weird, at first, as they’re both timid and excited and confused all at once. George had never kissed a guy before, really, and it was far more different than he anticipated.

But a good kind of different.

An *amazing* kind of different.

The kiss was brief at first, unsure, just a mere lock of lips for a second or two, or three before George pulled back, flickered his eyes upward to see that Dream's face reflected his own: the want for more, more, more.

And he just gave it to him.

He leaved forward and closed his eyes as he let go of that fear and anxiousness and he let himself have this moment. He let himself shiver at the feeling of Dream's hand above his knee again, just on the middle of his thigh, and he figured Dream felt that shiver if the slight smirk against his lips was anything to go off of.

Then, all of a sudden, they *actually* kissed.

Dream reached his hands under George's thighs— nowhere uncomfortable, just under his knees— and guided him to sit on his lap (holy shit, George was going to *die*) as George learned what kissing Dream *really* felt like.

He was so damn good at it.

Hands were gliding from his shoulders to his waist and each drag of the fingertips made him shiver time and time again, but out of spite, he managed to get something of a gasp from Dream as he gave his damp hair a light tug. Dream's fingers were calloused, he discovered. He wondered what that was from, if he'd picked up guitar over winter break or something.

But his lips were warm, soft, his mouth was even warmer. He felt the hands tighten a little, in a way that was so securing and safe that it made George's heart give a weak flutter just as they pulled apart, but only for a second before diving into the dangerous waters of this kiss again.

George grazed his teeth against Dream's bottom lip before Dream promptly wrapped both arms tight around his middle, pressed them together and took George's bottom lip in his mouth, wow George didn't think having this much tongue in a kiss could actually be so good that it was *addicting*, and then Dream let go of the kiss enough to stray his lips to the sides of George's mouth, a kiss to his cheek, then to his jaw, the underside of his jaw. Once he reached his upper neck, Dream does this thing where his teeth just *brush* against the skin there, George gasped higher than he would've like, a sound breathy enough to draw heat to his face in embarrassment. He'd really never felt like this before, this was all new.

But Dream just pauses, smiling so close to his neck that he can *feel* his teeth before Dream says, "God, that was *hot*."

George snickers, taps the back of his head and mutters a heartfelt "*idiot*" before he brings his face back up again and they kiss, kiss, kiss, until George's lips feel swollen and Dream actually panted when they pulled apart.

They pulled apart for good this time, apparently, as all of a sudden, the daze and warmth of the hot tub didn't get to George's heart and he was sobered up by what they just *did*.

He still sat in Dream's lap, hands still ruffled in his hair, thighs still stretched across Dream's.

As Dream's eyes widened, George knew they were thinking the same thing: Fuck.

"Uh," Dream says slowly, hands slowly prying away from George's back. "George, could you..?" "Hm?" George was clearly still in a daze before his eyes snap open and he bursts, "oh! Right, sorry."

Sorry.” He slips off of Dream’s lap and lets go of him.

If his lips weren’t tingling as proof of what just happened, George would’ve figured he imagined it all.

But everywhere Dream touched him just *burned* into his skin in such an addictive way that he doubted he’d ever forget about it.

But what the *fuck*? What were they going to do? Did Dream want to kiss him because he was bored? Because he wanted someone to make out with?

Or... could George let himself hope that Dream liked him?

“I can’t tell what you’re thinking,” George finally says, breaking their unbearable silence. His voice was pleading, begging for clues.

Dream remains silent, and for once, George absolute hates it. He hates it so much that he feels sick.

“Please tell me what you’re thinking,” George whispers, his voice low. He remembered when Dream had said that to him, voice raw and vulnerable, eyes filled with all the guilt in the world. And now here George was, not at fault, yet he was still the prey of miscommunication.

“I don’t know,” Dream says slowly, “what I’m thinking.”

*What the hell do I do with that?* George refuses to look away as he holds Dream’s gaze. He’s trying, he’s trying so hard to make something out of what they just did. “Well,” George retorts, “we did just, y’know, make out, so... if that’s a clue to your thoughts, let me know.”

Dream sighs, “look, I just... I wanted to kiss you, and- and it was- well, it was amazing-”

George feels his heart prick at that. “Wait, you only... you only did that because you *felt* like kissing me? Is... is that all?”

Dream scoffs, “of course that’s *not all*, George.” *Then don’t hold back.* “I guess this makes it pretty impossible to run away from my feelings for you, huh?”

George’s eyes widen like saucers. “You- wait. You..?” He was sputtering stupidly before he finally says, “feelings for... me?”

Dream snorts. “Well, yeah.”

And George realizes it for the first time.

It was like a rolling snowball as he remembers how wide Dream’s eyes were when they first met, how shocked he was that he met someone he didn’t have to hear every thought of.

The symphony George felt for Dream reached a crescendo in this moment, the music was reaching its climax within this realization.

He realized how Dream looked at him wasn’t how Dream looked at everyone; he remembered how willing Dream was to drape his hoodies around George’s shoulders whenever it was the slightest bit cold; he noticed that the recurring visits to the coffee shop, the unexplained flustered-ness, the bright smiles meant only for him— that wasn’t just friendship.

Violins sang as George finally, finally came to a bright conclusion:

Their bond wasn't meant to be platonic. Their bond wasn't *ever* meant to be platonic.

They needed each other. They were each other's backbone, each other's rock. They were each other's *everything*.

It was scary, but it was real.

"If it's not obvious enough," George finally finds himself saying aloud, "I... like you too."

Dream's eyes light up.

Then they dim.

George's heart falters with a sense of impending doom: something was wrong for sure.

"But we can't, George." Dream sits up, breaks their gaze, and sits on the edge of the cement rounding the hot tub. The water sloshes onto George, but he was so fixated on Dream that he didn't even flinch. "*I can't.*"

"What..." George's brows crease. "What do you mean you can't?"

"I can't," Dream repeats, more defeat within his voice. "I'll-" He cuts himself off.

"You'll what?" George urges.

"I'll hurt you," Dream finally forces out. "George, I'll- I'll mess up, and I'll hurt you." His voice quiets, "I... I can't do that."

The frustration settles down as George's gaze softens. Cautiously, he sets a hand on Dream's knee and murmurs, "Dream, I'm not *her*." He reaches to meet his eyes, "I'm not her, and I never have been."

Dream searches his face for a long time before he finally drags himself up, dries off and pulls his clothes onto his damp skin once again. George hates it, how the silence had its grip tight and suffocating around his throat.

Their walk home was silent, even if George had so, so, so much to say.

"You're not going to hurt me," George insists as he pulls his hoodie over his head.

He can tell by the look in Dream's eyes that he doesn't believe him.

In many symphonies, there's a moment of grace following the dramatic climax. This is the resolve of the song.

It draws back, slow as an ocean wave retracing to the ocean, back into the tame, gentle melody as opposed to the demanding pinnacle. The violins paint background noise, the piano is a mere support. The voices of instruments, one screaming, die away into something less lively.

Had they reached the resolve in their relationship?

Was this the end?

George wished he were braved as in complete silence, he watched Dream take the fork in the path that would lead him back to his own respective apartment.

He wished he chased after him and tried *harder*, tried to convince him to get out of his own head.

But he didn't.

Sleeping in his own bed never felt so wrong and so quiet as reality settled in:

This was the end of their song. The end of their journey.

Well, that is, if he let it be.

## Chapter End Notes

I hope this makes sense???

## Chapter 16

### Chapter Notes

"I'm not afraid anymore  
what makes you sure  
you're all I need?  
Forget about it,  
when you walk out the door  
and leave me torn  
You're teaching me to live without it"  
- lyrics from "bored" by Billie Eilish

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

### ***Dream***

There was no worse feeling than the feeling of being far away from home.

It's unfortunately familiar, the sensation of tired feet and drooping eyes searching for *home*, so far that it seemed to bleed into an unreachable horizon.

The question of *will I ever make it?* but realizing there is no other option but to go onward.

Dream reached a hand to a crimson sky swirling with thoughts that weren't from his own mind. The voices sounding like anything but his own, rude and unforgiving as they pelted their words to him relentlessly.

It was too much.

Dream felt like crawling in bed, covering his ears with his hands and crying it all out of his system.

He knew he was only in a dream, that none of this was real, that the sky wasn't raining thoughts on him and he was only stuck in some twisted reality for a few more minutes at most.

But it was still too much.

The noise grew louder, louder, ugly and merciless, so loud Dream couldn't hear himself screaming *stop, stop, stop!* at the sky-

Until it did stop, all at once.

He found himself in a familiar hot tub once again, eyes adjusting to the darker setting. The memories hit him in an instant; George in his hands, George on his lips, George on his mouth, George on his mind-

George, George, George.

But when Dream turned his head to the side, he discovered he was entirely alone in this hot tub.

"*You did this to yourself,*" a voice whispers to him. Dream whips his head around, but of course no

one is there. *“You did this to yourself. You ruined it. You ruined me.”*

Dream turns back around, but he’s still alone.

The voice sounded suspiciously like the man he couldn’t seem to shake from his thoughts.

*“Why can’t you let me go?”*

Dream shakes his head. It’s just a dream. It’s just a dream.

*“Why can’t you let me be free?”*

It’s just a dream. A nightmare. A conjuring from his overactive imagination.

*“Why did you have to hurt me?”*

And the voices were back again, the sky was red, the sounds all around him were louder and louder until the smallest sound of the wind shaking the leaves of nearby trees was enough to make Dream twitch— these noises were torture to his senses, it was too much, too thick, too many layers—

Then, he woke to the feeling of something buzzing against his leg.

Dream practically gulped in the air as he panted heavily, grimacing as he felt the cold sweat sticking his shirt to his chest uncomfortably. His heart was beating so quickly he feared it wasn’t *possible* for it to beat so quickly.

Forcing himself to take deeper breaths and grip his hands around the sheets of his bed as a reminder he was *here* and not in his own dangerous mind, Dream grounds himself enough to see whatever had woken him up.

He gazes downward to find his answer: his phone.

He squints at the bleary light from his alarm clock. 3:30 in the morning? Who on earth would call him at such a time?

Then he looked at his phone close enough to see the contact of George across his screen, a picture Dream had taken when George had fallen asleep on his couch and Patches sat on his head. It had to be the best picture on his camera roll.

He feels the guilt twist a knife in his heart as he realized that George must’ve not slept at all if he was calling him at such an hour.

Dream stares at the screen for a long time, brows creasing together as he felt each ring vibrate against his palms as a reminder that George was still trying to reach him.

Dream wished George would stop reaching for him. Part of him wanted to reach out to George, too, to grab him by the hands and pull him in and never let go. To stop being an absolute dumbass and let himself just- feel.

But there was a more dangerous, mean side of him that felt like he didn’t *deserve* George. That he should tell George to run away as fast as he can before they inevitably crawl back to each other again.

Dream hesitated too long as eventually, his phone stopped vibrating in his hands, but instead he busied himself with reading the various Discord notifications from George.



**GeorgeNotFound:**

*Today at 1:00 AM*

Can we talk

*Today at 1:59 AM*

Please

*Today at 2:21 AM*

What do you mean that you'll hurt me?

You know you can't do that, right?

What am I even saying?

*Today at 3:01 AM*

Dream

I can't lose you

Not you

*Today at 3:31 AM*

***GeorgeNotFound is calling...***

Dream knew that this was the sleep deprivation making George be more honest than he was comfortable with. He knew how George got when he was tired, he knew how he took on some borderline-drunk traits than were usually pretty funny.

Now it just hurt, knowing Dream had reduced him to this.

"I'm sorry," Dream whispers to his phone screen.

His phone rings again, but he only stares at it.

His finger hovered over the bright red X before suddenly a voice from the other room in the apartment shouted, "answer the fucking phone, you idiot!"

Oh, so George got Wilbur in on this?

Dream sighs.

The least he could do was say enough to get George to go to sleep, right?

His finger hovers from the decline button as instead, he presses the accept button.

Even after he answered, he didn't say anything. He was so scared that he could feel his heart beat picking up once again.

"Dream?"

George's voice was grainy over the phone and a little slurred from exhaustion.

“Hey,” Dream forces himself to say. He lays flat on his back, the phone pressed to his ear as he stares at his ceiling. George gives a shaky breath into the receiver before he finally says,

“What are you thinking?”

It was a general question, but Dream knew exactly what he meant.

“That I’m an idiot,” Dream admits. George huffs a laugh.

“Well, yeah.”

There’s more silence, but George is the one to fill it. “Can you… help me understand what you meant by hurting me?”

Dream stays silent as he hadn’t quite figured that out for himself. George liked him and he liked George— why was he making this so complicated? He wished he knew. “It’s just—” Dream exhales, “I’ve messed up in the past and- pushed people away when they get to close.”

“You could hear their thoughts though, couldn’t you?” George urges. “Of course you pushed them away. People are- they suck. They think terrible things even when they don’t want to. So. Of course you did that.”

“But George,” Dream pleads. “I’ve never been with someone without using their thoughts as a sort of guidance. Like- people think I’m super intuitive when in reality I’m just cheating and using their own brain as a way to fulfill their needs.”

“Dream, listen to me, will you?” Dream listens. “You have- you’ve helped me more than anyone ever has, really. And you know what’s funny about that? You can’t hear my thoughts. You can’t *cheat* with me.” Dream could tell that George was playing all of his cards, trying so hard to coerce Dream into believing him.

Dream didn’t realize how quiet he’d been until eventually, George’s voice was saying, “Dream? Are you still there?”

Dream hums in recognition, and he hears George sigh a little.

“We don’t have to be anything,” George pleads. “We don’t have to- put a label on anything. Hell, we can just be friends.” George sighs shakily again, “we can go back to how we were.”

“We both know that’s not possible,” Dream whispers. “We can’t go *back* after we-”

“Who says we have to go back, then?”

“George-”

“Dream, I’m not- letting you go. Just like that.” George’s voice was determined. “I’m not letting you *leave* unless that’s what you really want.”

Dream gulps and presses his fingertips to his closed lids as he remembers.

Fleeting moments where George would fall asleep with his head in his lap and Dream would throw pillows at everyone else around to make sure they’d keep quiet. Days where all they would do was sit on George’s living room floor, down a beer or two and keep their eyes glued to the xbox screen. Dream could be laying on George’s bedroom floor, using George’s stomach as a pillow and mindlessly scrolling through his Instagram feed, not a word being exchanged. He’d be perfectly

content.

Dream realized that he wasn't scared of hurting George.

He was scared of his own feelings.

He'd never needed someone so badly, he'd never *wanted* someone so badly.

It was terrifying.

"I'll wait for you," George insists. "I'll wait forever."

"You won't," Dream retorts.

"I will," George replies.

Eventually, they both fell asleep with the phone pressed to their ears, waking to the sight of a wordless call until Dream eventually hung up.

Forever.

Would George really wait that long?

Dream sighs.

He wouldn't need to wait that long, anyway.

---

Dream didn't let himself look at his phone for the remainder of the weekend.

He blocked notifications from Discord on his computer, and left most messages on read. Really, the only person he interacted with was Patches, and occasionally Wilbur.

In other words, he was avoiding George.

He needed space. He was being an idiot, but he needed to breathe before he dove back under the surface and tried again. George said he would wait. He said he would wait forever. Dream was trying his best to believe him.

He decided he would dedicate this weekend to streaming as for once he managed to finish his work. But while he was on the stream, not doing much, mostly running around his world and glancing over at his chat every now and then, he saw one dono that forced him to think:

*Hey, Dream! Hope you're doing good today :D I was wondering, where's that guy George you always stream with?*

Dream gulps.

He could feel his phone buzzing against his leg with text notifications, and in that moment, he was extremely grateful for the lack of a face cam so people couldn't see the way his face fell through the floor. The free hand he had petting Patches froze.

He plays this off with a forced laugh. "He's being responsible and shit. He'll... he'll be back soon. Um, that'll be the end of today's stream everybody. Thanks for stopping by- don't forget to follow and twitch prime, guys. Let's see those primes rolling in."

Even as his brain switched off and he entered the autopilot of thanking each subscription and follow, Dream's mind was elsewhere.

It wasn't until he switched off his stream and leaned back in his chair that he finally looked down at his eagerly vibrating phone. It was Sunday, around midnight. It had been nearly 48 hours since he'd spoken to George.

Unsurprisingly, his lock screen was littered with stacks of notifications from texts, Discords, and Instagram dms alike, but at the top of his screen was a collection of incoming messages.

**Sapnap:**

*Saturday at 10:01 AM*

Hey wanna hop on the server

*Saturday at 2:40 PM*

Bruhyyy lmk when you're done being busy and shit

*Sunday at 1:13 AM*

Be like that ig

*Sunday at 1:15 AM*

Are you okay?

*Sunday at 11:54 PM*

George is drunk crying

What the fuck did you do to him

Vc, now

Dream wasn't self-loathing enough to look through the stack of notifications from George, but he figured evading Sapnap at this point was just unfair. So, Dream's finger hovered over his mouse as with one fateful click, he would join vc 2, where Sapnap's small circle of an icon signified that he was there, waiting.

Dream felt a similar sensation as a child peering into the open door of the principle's office.

He sighed, and joined.

*"So, wanna explain why George is passed out on my bedroom floor?"*

Dream feels a pang to his heart at that imagery. George wasn't much of a drinker on the later days of the weekend, especially in the middle of the semester. He knew how to party, but he also knew *when* to party. Dream had tried his best to follow George's habits.

But this- passed out drunk on his friend's bedroom floor- that didn't sound like the George he knew.

“Because I’m a fucking idiot,” Dream says, words more bitter than he’d intended.

*“Then stop,” Sapnap says. “Stop being a fucking idiot, pull your head out of your ass, and talk to him. When... he’s not drowning in his own drunk tears.”*

“He’s crying?” Dream murmurs.

Sapnap snorts. *“Well... he realized there weren’t anymore of his special chocolate raisins and literally started crying over it. It was pretty funny, honestly.”*

Dream can’t laugh. His throat feels tight.

Why was it that when he thought he was done fucking up, he’d fuck up some more?

*“Get your ass over here and deal with him.”*

“But-”

*“Nope. You started this, you’re gonna finish it.”*

“...I’ll be over in five minutes.”

Dream was over in four minutes, because he ran. He didn’t have answers to his own feelings and actions, but he knew he owed this to Sapnap. To George.

So, once he let himself into the apartment familiar enough to be his own, Dream walked over to where Sapnap’s bedroom door stood ajar, where Sapnap was sitting at his desk chair with folded arms and raised brows. And, sure enough, there was George on the center of the rug, flat on his back and head tilted to the side. He didn’t seem to be in any danger, he just seemed to be asleep.

“I can help,” Sapnap offers half-heartedly. Dream shakes his head.

“No, it’s fine.” He squats down next to George, whose cheeks were rosy from the alcohol he must’ve downed. He grumbles something as Dream pokes his side and half-awake he swats at Dream’s hands. “George,” Dream murmurs, “c’mon, let’s get you to bed.”

George’s eyes peer open enough to see Dream, and widen a little. Once he raised his head, there was a subtle imprint on the side of his face from where his cheek had been pressed against the carpet. “Dream?” He slurs.

“Yeah,” Dream says bashfully. “It’s me. Give me your hands, will you?”

George holds out his hands, eyes barely open, and Dream raises him up to his feet where he secured George’s arm around his shoulders. Dream gives a final wave to Sapnap before he practically drags a very drunk, very tired George across the apartment to his own room.

“I ate all of my raisins,” George hiccups. He smelled like Vodka.

“Mm,” Dream hums, nudging open the door with his foot. “So I’ve heard.”

“I missed you,” George continues, head leaning against Dream’s shoulder. “Missed how you-kissed me. Touched me.”

“George,” Dream warns, face getting hot, “you’re drunk.”

“I know,” George mutters. “Doesn’t make it less true.”

There's a long silence as Dream untucks George's bed for him, the room dark aside from the thin strips of moonlight from the gaps in George's blinds.

"I'm sorry," Dream whispers, turning to face him. "I'm so, so sorry-"

"I know," George says again. "I... know that."

Dream helps George sink into his bed. They look at each other for a long time.

"Sleep well, alright?" Dream turns his back to George, about to leave when he feels a hand grip his wrist.

"Don't disappear," George murmurs, eyes practically already closed.

Dream's eyes widen, before he finds it in him to smile back at him.

"I won't," Dream murmurs back. "Trust me, George. I couldn't go anywhere even if I wanted to."

"Okay," George whispers, settling further into his blankets. "See you tomorrow, then."

"See you tomorrow," Dream whispers.

He wasn't lying.

## Chapter End Notes

This was my attempt to explain where Dream's head is at  
Also the next chapter is already in progress so I'll update v soon >:)

# Chapter 17

## Chapter Notes

last chapter!

"Do you know how in love with you

I am

Do you see how in love with you

I am

Every thing that you do, it makes my heart stop

Oh, it stops"

- lyrics from "please notice" by christian leave

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

### **George**

Pro tip: broken hearts and hang overs make terrible combination.

Second pro tip: hang overs and early shifts at work make an even worse combination.

In all honesty, George didn't remember much of anything from the previous night after 10 PM. He remembered cracking open a bottle of Vodka and not much else, other than the gross smell of Sapnap's bedroom floor.

Somehow, he found himself tucked into bed the following morning with a sticky-note on his bedside table that said *have a good day*, the only signature being a smiley face, so he figured it was the handiwork of Dream. The same Dream who was actually driving him crazy.

If only George had a nickel for every unanswered call and dm he received over this damned weekend.

He knew that Dream had a rough relationship back in high school, and he knew that Dream generally had a hard time making friends because of his freak telekinetic abilities. One night, when Dream had been fast asleep and stretched over George's lap like some sun-bathing cat, Wilbur had divulged the truth about Dream's previously antisocial behaviors.

*"You changed that, though,"* Wilbur had told him with a satisfied glint in his eyes. *"You brought a new crowd of people in his life who made everything more bearable."*

So George was trying really, really hard to understand why Dream was avoiding him and dodging his calls. But obviously he wasn't fully succeeding given he ended up with a Vodka bottle clutched in his hands on a Sunday night.

And so, here George was, absolutely hung over and hating the world that seemed pitted against him.

Why can Dream leave him sticky notes on his bedside table, but he can't answer a fucking *text*?

George didn't realize how spaced off he was until the customer who must've been waiting for several minutes cleared their throat to gain George's attention. Snapping back to life, George

scrambles to reset the register as he hastily apologizes to the customer and fastens that customer-friendly smile on his face.

He had been so focused on recording the order, *medium mocha almond milk latte with cinnamon*, that he didn't realize just who this was.

Well, of course he would've recognized his voice if he wasn't hung over and sleep deprived.

But what he did recognize was this specific order. George made this exact variation of a mocha for Dream when he discovered that Dream actually hated tea.

Slowly, George looks up to see the culprit.

Surely enough, there Dream was, bag slung over his shoulder, hair tussled and eyes filled with anxiety. George noticed how his hands twitched at his sides.

"So," Dream starts, voice unsteady, "before you yell at me, which I honestly recommend, I have a few peace offerings."

George crosses his arms against his chest and raises his brows. "Go on," he urges. The customers behind Dream murmured, but most were too glued to their phone screens to care.

Dream fishes something out of his bag before dropping it onto the counter separating them. "First, we have your special chocolate raisins. Gross, but a classic." George clearly recalled Dream eating a good portion of his chocolate raisin stash the other weekend. "Then, there's this tea that the person at the store said helps with hangovers, so you'll have to let me know if that actually works—" Dream takes out a tin and sets that beside the chocolate raisins. "One more thing." Dream slips off the bag, sets it on the counter, and slips off the green (yellow?) hoodie he had on, bundled it up, and offered it to George.

"I know you always forget to bring hoodies to your morning shifts," he says, hair even more tussled now that he'd pulled his hoodie over his head, "so I thought I'd give you mine."

Wordlessly, George takes the hoodie from Dream and turns it over in his hands. It was still warm from when Dream had been wearing it. George was about to hand it right back to him, but he was beginning to notice the goosebumps gathering on his own arms as the coffee shop was rather drafty, especially in the cooler mornings. So, he pulled the hoodie on over his apron.

"You didn't have to do all of this," George murmurs. He was really trying to be mad at Dream, he was trying *so* hard, but it seemed impossible at this point.

"I did," Dream insists. Why was he so hard on himself? "Well, you deserve more, honestly. But..." Dream takes a breath, "George, I'm sick of running. I'm sure you're sick of me running, too. And—I was so stupid this weekend. I've been so stupid for so *long*. But you know what? I'm done being stupid." He lets out a shaky exhale before he fully meets George's eyes, "I love you, George. I'm not going anywhere if you don't want me to. If you don't want to be anything with me, fair enough. I'll leave you alone. But..." George's heart felt like it stopped, in fact, it felt like the whole *world* stopped as Dream said the fateful three words. He *loved* him? George's heart hurts.

Dream looks nervous, but at the same time, so sure of himself. "If you want— well, me— just... let me know." Dream sighs, steps aside to let the next customer take his place, and picks up his now-empty bag. George watches, dumbfounded. "I know some raisins and a hoodie won't solve anything, but... I hope you like them." With that, Dream gives a final wave, nothing left to say as he turns his back and leaves George with the largest dilemma of his life.



Dream came to this coffee shop, full of people whose thoughts must be annoying and relentless. He humbled himself and took the hoodie off his own back, and *still* acted like he wasn't enough.

George decided he'd be an idiot if he let Dream leave the coffee shop, because he knew their song wasn't over.

In fact, they had only made it through the introduction.

Their love song, their symphony— it was only just beginning.

So, George shouted a hasty “Karl, take the register” as he set aside the raisins and tea on the back table before he slid across the counter, bounded past staring customers and grabbed Dream's wrist before he could step foot out of the shop.

“Dream,” George says a little breathlessly, his grip loosening once Dream turned around and looked at him. His eyes were wide with surprise, hands trembling less. “Wait, will you?”

Dream is patient as George catches his breath before he meets their eyes again. “You didn't do anything wrong,” George insists. “Well, maybe you avoided me after we literally made out, but you didn't deliberately try to hurt me.” Dream opens his mouth to protest but George continues, “was I pissed at you? Sure, I was, but I didn't ever stop *liking* you, which kinda pissed me off more. But...” He gulps, “I love you.” Now that he was looking at Dream, he wasn't pissed at all. In fact, his heart was pounding in his chest as he looked at Dream, looking at him. He had to remind himself that this was real, that the cautious hand not letting go of his wrist wasn't a figment of his imagination.

“God,” George whispers, “kiss me?”

Once he gets over the momentary shock, Dream *kisses* him, alright. Maybe a little too much for a public setting, but George relished in the feeling that followed their lips meeting. They weren't perfect, no, but they liked each other— no, *loved* each other— and they would figure the rest out together. George hadn't been so sure about pursuing Dream at first, but now, as Dream had his arms around him and *held* him with such endearing care, George knew he'd be an idiot for letting him go.

Once they finally forced themselves to pull apart, George could actually feel himself grinning ear-to-ear, and as Dream pressed his forehead to George's, he could feel him doing the same.

“You only have a half hour left on your shift, right?” George nods slowly. “Mind if I steal you, then?”

George looks over Dream's shoulder to see Karl and Sapnap making insufferable kissy faces at him. He cringed at the thoughts they must be thinking, and with one glance at Dream, he figured his suspicions of dirty thoughts were right. “Please do,” George says. It seems that the customers stopped caring about the employee and the random guy being gay in the corner, and were more interested in getting their coffee and leaving.

“Hey, Karl!” Dream shouts. “I'm taking George with me!”

George shoots him a look but was snickering as he said, “shut up, you idiot! Wh-” But his banter didn't last long as in an instant, Dream had swooped George into his arms and literally slung him over his shoulder. “Dream!” George shrieks, hands clutching the material of Dream's t-shirt and legs kicking out weakly, but his attempts to look like he was struggling diminished as he was laughing too hard to put up a good fight.

Even as Dream set George down and their hands silently entwined between them, they talked about anything and everything as usual. Despite the fact that they were now clearly on the road of being something *more* than friends, there wasn't a huge shift in dynamic. There weren't fireworks, or explosions signifying they finally got together and would, hopefully, soon be officially dating. But George liked it that way.

George didn't want some grand encore or loud, climatic ending.

He just wanted Dream, and all of the soft music that came with him.

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## Epilogue

### *Dream*

Here's the thing about being able to hear everyone's internal conflicts and thoughts all the time: it makes you hate humanity to the *extreme*.

At least, that's what Dream thought before he met George.

He thought he would survive by living the life of a recluse, by sheltering himself from pain.

But George, of course, had to come and ruin that negative outlook. Thank goodness for him.

Dream wasn't one to believe in soulmates or love at first sight, but he had to admit there was some irony to the sequence of Wilbur using up all the coffee beans leading to Dream meeting a particular British barista that he, gloriously enough, couldn't hear a single thought of.

Maybe Dream didn't have the best example of love as he watched his parents' marriage crumble similarly to his first relationship, and eventually, George's relationship.

But he did have the best example of what love should be like. It was right in front of him.

Dream and George had the type of relationship that had everyone around them both incredibly endeared and highly irritated at how *perfect* they were together. But they worked hard to get where they were.

When Dream's eyes would be glued to his monitor screen, scrutinizing the chat of his stream, searching for flaws and personal jabs, George would step behind him and massage out his shoulders, a silent action to bring him back to earth. When George would station himself at his desk to study and hardly get up for hours, Dream would be the one to tug him up to his feet, even as George was whining "*please, Dream, just one more page of studying-*" and Dream would grin at him and say "*studying isn't going anywhere, but the ice cream place closes in a half hour*" where George would begrudgingly admit Dream was right about taking study breaks.

Dream had so many favorite aspects of his and George's relationship that it was hard to settle for an overall favorite, yet at the top of his list had to be their level of comfort that they woke up in each other's beds more often than not. Sometimes it was because George fell asleep on Dream's couch with Patches in his lap and a book on his face. Other times it was because Dream didn't feel like leaving George just yet, so they'd fall asleep in bed together. But Dream had about half of his wardrobe in George's closet, and vice versa.

The other benefit of being so close was mornings like these.

Dream's eyes drifted open as, unsurprisingly, he found himself staring at the light gray of George's ceiling. There was enough sunlight pouring into the room to signify that it was early afternoon, but Dream didn't feel any need to get up. It was Sunday, after all. Or maybe Saturday. He couldn't remember.

Dream turns his head to the side, eyes partially open, to see George laying beside him. He had his back to him, bare shoulders peeking out from under the blankets. He breathed slowly, a signal that he was still asleep, and Dream gave a small smile at the sight.

Delicately, he scooted closer and gave a small kiss to George's shoulder, and then settled on brushing the hair from his eyes. The world was quiet aside from the bustle of thoughts outside of the apartment, or the noise of Sappnap making coffee in the kitchen, but the noises faded to his periphery as he looked at George.

Gradually, he sat himself up and looked over to see their clock signifying it was nearly 1 PM. He frowns a little as he remembered George saying he had a goal to wake up at noon.

As carefully as possible, Dream gives his shoulder a small prod and murmurs, "George, c'mon, time to wake up."

With a good deal of murmuring and prodding, George finally opened his eyes and rolled over onto his back to look up at Dream. Dream felt the air escape his lungs.

The sunlight painted across George's face with shades of gold and warmth, his groggy eyes illuminating in the rays. He looked like a painting, like a figment of Dream's imagination as he looked down at him in wonder.

He really loved him, didn't he?

George's lip's crease a little as he smiles up at Dream, who still was looking dumbfounded by his boyfriend's beauty.

*Yeah*, Dream thinks fondly to himself as he watches George take one of Dream's hands in both of his own and turn it over, eyes threatening to close, *I really love him*.

"Morning," George mutters, forcing himself to a seated position. "Sleep well?"

Dream grins. "Yeah, I did. You?"

"Yeah."

George was about to flop back down and probably go back to sleep but Dream helped him back up saying *no, no. No you don't*.

But something felt... off.

Dream scrutinizes his surroundings for it.

Something felt very, very different.

What was it?

It was as if he had gotten lost in admiring George and he came back with some sense that something was off.

"Are you okay?" George asks, brows creasing together as he looks at Dream. Dream nods slowly,

“Yeah, yeah. I just feel... weird. I don't know what it is.” He frowns in thought. He didn't feel physically sick. He didn't feel tired, really, or stressed. He felt perfectly happy.

What *was* it?

It hit him once Sapnap knocked twice (a habit Sapnap had been forced to pick up for... unnamed reasons) and let himself in once there weren't any shouts of protest. “G'morning, lovebirds,” Sapnap says snidely. “Karl and Quackity and Wilbur are coming over to play Smash, so. If you wanna keep sleeping, you'll probably have a hard time.”

“Oh, that's fine,” George says with a small yawn, but Dream was staring intently at Sapnap. What was going on? Something felt *very* missing. “We were done sleeping anyway.”

“Alright. There's some coffee in the machine if y'all want it.” Sapnap looks to Dream skeptically. “You good, man? You look kinda... buggy.”

Dream is snapped back to life. “Yeah, I'm good. I think I'm just waking up, still.”

Sapnap hums, walks backwards and lets the door swing shut just as he's saying “no loud sex when we're having the guests over, alright?” George groans in annoyance, throwing a pillow in Sapnap's direction only for it to hit the closed door.

“He's an idiot,” George mutters. Dream could feel his gaze on him before George finally says, “are you *sure* you're alright?”

Dream stares intently at his own hands before it hits him.

No, it couldn't be.

Dream closes his eyes for a moment before focuses, draws from the familiar feeling in him, and lifts a hand to supposedly raise the empty coke can across the room with his telekinesis.

It didn't move.

It didn't even twitch.

Dream's eyes widen.

“George,” he whispers. “George!”

“Yes..?” George says slowly.

“They're gone!” Dream exclaims, suddenly springing to his feet. “I can't hear a single thought! They're all gone!”

George's eyes widen too, and suddenly he's also springing to his feet. “Wait, *seriously*? Not a single one?” This was an unmistakably happy thing. George had witnessed enough of Dream's panic attacks and sensory overloads to know that hearing people's thoughts all the time without fail was a cruel kind of torture.

“Not a single one!” Dream echoes. Finally, he could just *think* something without all the radio noise drowning him out. He could look at people and not have so much as a clue as what they were really thinking about.

It was beautiful.

As they embraced, arms strewn around each other and eyes squinting with how brightly they were smiling, Dream didn't really care of finding out why his powers disappeared. He wasn't even that worried about being a functional human being without his secret powers given that George has taught him to trust himself.

Maybe his powers vanished because of something cheesy, like Dream fully loving George and the universe riding him of his curse or some shit.

Maybe he just got lucky.

But either way, George had cured him of his agoraphobia. Dream didn't feel belittled by other people anymore, he didn't let their thoughts invade his own.

So yeah, Dream would never know what George was thinking. He would never be able to look at him and detect if he was lying, never be able to listen to his brain to find the full truth. That used to terrify him, but not so much, anymore.

Dream knew George wasn't going anywhere, because George was his home. George was his safety.

"Get some clothes on," George says against his chest, "let's walk around the park and get some waffles."

Dream grins.

He'd never know what George was thinking.

But he didn't need to.

## Chapter End Notes

Thank you all SO MUCH for staying around for this fic. Seriously, the support has been unreal!

I'm sad to see it end, but I hope you all enjoyed the ride.

Also, I'm going to publish my new fic in a day or two. It's going to be a dnf band au and enemies-to-lovers, so stay tuned! If you couldn't already tell, I really love music, so I'm super super hyped to start writing!

I love you all very much! Take care <3

Please [drop by the archive and comment](#) to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!